

A Bundle of Yarns

Fred W. Shibley

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A Bundle
of
Yarns

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FRED W. SHIBLEY

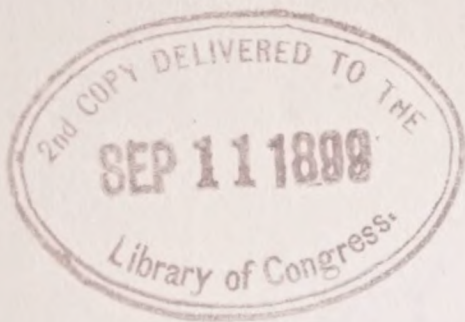


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Me an' Ed an' Jane

When me an' Ed an' Jane was just little fellers (I was two years older than Ed, and Ed was two years older than Jane), we didn't have the fancy toys to amuse ourselves with that children have now-days. Why, I don't believe we ever received a present except at Christmas, and you must remember our father was a good Christian man and class leader to boot.

We used to set our caps for Christmas, the whole pasel of us. Set 'em on the center table in the parlor and go to sleep expectin' to find marvellous things in them in the mornin'. We usually found a few bulls'-eyes and a dozen or so nuts and raisins. But we were happy just the same, and enjoyed ourselves about as well as the average.

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Jane was always with us, and a clip she was. I remember once, just after threshin'—you know, we lived on a farm, three hundred acres it was, twenty miles from the nearest city, in a typical country neighborhood. Well, as I was goin' to tell you about Jane: One time just after threshin', me an' Ed an' Jane crawled up on the roof of the barn and jumped down on the big straw stack in the barnyard. Any of you that ever saw a straw stack, knows it is built like a cone—big at the bottom and little at the top. Well, we jumped down on the straw stack, and then it occurred to Ed that it might be an interestin' experience to slide down the stack. He tried it, and came out all right. Then I tried it and landed fair, and right after me came Jane with a whoop and her petticoats flyin'. It was fine, for you see, about five feet from the ground the stack was built up straight like a wall, and when we came to this point in the slide we shot out into the air like as if we was on a toboggan slide.

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We hadn't found anything for many a day quite equal to that stack as a fun producer; so up we goes on the barn again, down we jumps on the stack, and away we goes on the slide to the ground.

Now it happened that there was some cows feedin' in the barnyard, but we hadn't noticed 'em, and these cows kept edgin' 'round the stack toward our slide-way. Well, now you know, after we had been up and down half a dozen times or so, we got to yellin' like wild Injuns and seein' who could get 'round first. The last round, Ed struck fair and jumped aside; I followed him and also jumped, for I expected Jane was right after me, but she wasn't. She was standin' on top of the stack, holdin' both hands above her head and shoutin': "Watch me come, boys! Watch me come!"

Now, just as she said those words, a fat mulley cow walked leisurely forward directly in front of us, and as Jane came down she struck kerflop right on top of

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that mulley cow. Yes, sir, fair on top as you ever see; and with a wild blat, the cow started for the lane, Jane hangin' on and yellin' for all she was worth. Ed laid right down in the straw and shrieked with laughter, and I was grinnin' from ear to ear, when who do you think we saw, just as Jane and her mulley cow disappeared over the hill in the lane, but father, standin' in the drive-house door.

"What are you boys laughin' at?" he said, stern as a judge.

Ed only laughed the louder, but I began to feel mighty serious.

"Nothin' particular, sir," I said.

Then he asked, sudden like: "Where's Jane?"

"She's gone over the hill in the lane," I said.

"What in the world has she gone over there for?" he asked.

Ed was now lookin' solemn, too.

"Please, sir," he said, "will we go and fetch her back?"

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We didn't wait for his expression of permission, but streaked it up the lane as fast as our little legs could carry us. We found Jane pickin' a thistle out of her foot, near the sheep pond.

"Say, boys!" she cried, the moment she saw us, "you missed the best part of it!"

"You ain't hurt?" I asked.

"No," she said. "I jumped off when I'd gone as far as I wanted to. But, say, boys, did you watch me sail out of the barn yard?"

I tell you, Jane was a great girl. Another time I remember, me an' Ed an' Jane raised a pet steer. It was really Jane's steer, for father was mighty fond of her, and he'd let her do what he'd whale us for doin'. This steer grew up to be very tame, and Sime Snider, who was our hired man, rigged up a harness for him, and we used to hitch the steer to a big red hand-sleigh, which had always been in the family, and make it haul in our fire

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wood from the wood pile to the kitchen door. That was our regular work each day, fillin' up the big wood box behind the kitchen stove, and what we had once hated like sin to do, became a pleasure when we had taught the steer to haul the sleigh.

Well, one night after we had heaped up the wood box, we thought we would see what the steer could do as a trotter, so we piled on the sleigh, and I took the reins and away we went up the road. The steer trotted fine, and we was havin' a big time, when it occurred to Ed that this was too much fun to be enjoyed by just us three, so I hauled up at a neighbor's and Ed went in to get a boy and girl he had, and who was about our age. Pretty soon they came out, muffled up well, and their father with 'em. He looked our rig over with a grin on his face, and then he looked at the steer. His face grew solemn at once.

"Why, boys," he said, gravely, "don't

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you know that you can be arrested and fined for drivin' on the highway without bells?"

My jaw fell. I never thought of bells.

"We ain't got any bells," I returned, "except our best double harness bells, and we couldn't use them.

"Well, I think I can fix you out all right," he said, and went into his drive house, comin' out presently with an old string of bells that must have been made in the year one. They started with a bell as large as your fist in the middle of the string and tapered up both ways, and they was a whole brass band when they jingled. He tied these bells around the body of the steer, our invited guests snuggled down between Ed an' Jane, I chirped to the steer, and away we went up the road past the schoolhouse. I said we went, but if I'd said we flew, it would be nearer the truth, for the minute the steer heard that string of bells strike up in wild melody, it gave one blat and lit out for all it

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was worth. A scarter steer you never saw. I hung on to the lines with all my strength, but it was no use; the steer was runnin' away!

It was one thing to be run away with by a steer which found itself suddenly transformed into a musical machine, and another to live under the bombardment of snow-balls shot back at us from the steer's flyin' hoofs. The others turned their faces and hung on, but I kept one eye open ahead.

Well, now you know, we hadn't gone the width of a farm when what should I see comin' toward us but old Henry Simmonds and his wife in a cutter! There was only one track, and the snow was three feet deep on either side. In such a case, the way to pass is for one to turn out as far as possible and wait while the other crept slowly past. Our steer was not standin' on ceremony, and he needed the middle of the road. Old Mr. Simmonds had turned out as far as he dared

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in the limited time at his disposal, but it wasn't far enough, and as we flew by we just took one runner off his cutter as pretty as anything you ever saw. We didn't stop to ask how badly the old lady was hurt, but we saw her flyin' into a snow bank. On up the road we went, until the poor steer run himself to his limit, and then he flopped down in the road with one hopeless blat. When he recovered his wind I unhitched the bells and we turned the sleigh around and came home, the steer trottin' as gentle as a lamb.

It cost father \$40 for repairs on Mr. Simmond's cutter, but he made the neighbor who had given us the bells pay half, as he claimed it was his fault. No, I don't know what became of the bells. I never saw them again.

Goin' to Market

When I was only fourteen an' Ed twelve, father used to get us up at five of a cold winter's mornin', and start us off for the city with a load of potatoes for market. By gravy! it was cold. Me an' Ed would stand around and shiver and knock our heels together, while father and Sime Snider loaded the bags of potatoes into the big bob-sleigh; and after a bowl of supawn and milk and a few hot pancakes, away we would start, with a dollar and twenty cents for expenses,—fifty cents for baiting the horses in the city, fifty cents for our dinners, ten cents for toll, and ten cents for Joe Babcock, who kept a tavern half way in.

It was our custom to stop at Joe's both goin' in or comin' out, to spell the horses

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and warm our fingers and toes, for I tell you by the time we got to his place we would be two pretty cold boys. Father instructed us to hand Joe the ten cents, as he felt the tavern keeper should be paid a little somethin' for the use of his shed an' furnishin' a warm fire.

Both me an' Ed felt kind of sheepish about handin' Joe the ten cents, for we felt it wasn't just customary, and as we considered that father was such a religious man, and consequently ignorant of the genial customs of men of the world, we decided to follow our own judgment and do the thing up proper by havin' a five-cent drink apiece over the bar like men, and thus show a generous patronage of the house.

The mornin' I am goin' to tell you about we stopped at Joe's goin' in, but didn't have our drink, decidin' that we would probably enjoy it better in the afternoon. So we went into the city, sold our load of potatoes in the public market,

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had our dinner and fed the horses all right, and were just about to start for home when Ed thought of a stick of gum he'd promised to bring home to Jane. I didn't have an extra cent; neither had he. So all we could do was to spend five of the ten cents we had saved with which to patronize Joe Babcock. Ed bought the gum and we borrowed no trouble, such being our natures at that time.

It was a beautiful afternoon—clear as a bell, and so cold that the snow cracked as the steel runners of the bob-sleigh passed over it. We boys didn't particularly mind the cold just then, as we'd had a good dinner and were not yet many miles out. The horses jogged along, me drivin'—I always drove—and Ed sittin' wrapped in the buffalo robe to his ears, dreamin' of something or other, when bump! we struck on the bright iron rails of the Grand Trunk. We were upon the Teterville Crossing.

It had always been our custom when

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nearing this crossing to turn our heads either side and watch for approachin' trains, for this was a particularly dangerous spot, several people havin' been killed there.

Well, when we struck the rails, Ed waked up with a start, and lookin' to the right, saw the Chicago express about a quarter of a mile off bearin' down upon us with a roar. Without a moment's consideration for the distance, he sprang to his feet, and liftin' both hands, waved them wildy at the engine, shoutin' at the top of his voice—

“I say! I say!”

I nearly fell from the seat laughin,' for you know, we weren't more than a couple of seconds on the track. Ed looked mighty sheepish, and Jane rolled on the floor when I described to her Ed's frantic attempt at stoppin' the Chicago express by “I say! I say!”

Well, we finally came within sight of Joe's, and me an' Ed had to take into

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serious consideration the crisis that awaited us. Two drinks would cost ten cents, and we only had five.

"I tell you what we'll do, Ed," I proposed; "I don't care particularly about the drink, do you?"

"No," he replied.

"Well, one of us has got to take a drink, and only one, for we've just got five cents. So, supposin' you step up and take it?"

"I don't want it, George," he said. "You take it."

"Well, then," I went on, "if you feel sure you don't want the drink, I s'pose I'll have to take it; but you know, it'll look kind of mean for me to step up to the bar alone, so, s'posin' when I step up, you'll be sittin' by the stove, and I'll say, 'Ed, won't you have somethin'?' cordial like, you know, and you'll say, careless like, 'No, thank you; I guess not to-day.' That'll blind Joe's eyes, you see."

"All right," Ed said. "That'll suit me."

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So, when we came to Joe's, we put the horses under the shed, covered 'em warmly and went into the hotel to warm our own stiffened joints. After I'd got nice and comfortable, I gave Ed a wink and marched up to the bar, behind which Joe was standin'.

"Pretty cold day, Joe," I said. "Guess I'll have a drink to warm up," and then turnin 'to Ed, who sat dutifully by the stove, his feet on the damper, I said:

"Will you have a drink, Ed?"

"Well, George, seein' as it's you, I don't care if I do," Ed drawled out, and saunterin' up to the bar, poured out a drink unconcerned as you please, without ever lookin' at me.

Joe saw I was rattled, and said he:

"George, what you goin' to have?"

So, while I felt mean enough to sink through the floor, I told him I only had five cents, and was just workin' a bluff on Ed. Joe laughed till the tears rolled down his fat cheeks, and then declared

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that the drinks was on him, and wouldn't take a cent.

"Your father'll limber up one of these days, boys," he said, "but a little change in the pocket won't look so big to you then."

“The Chivaree”

When any young couple in the neighborhood got married, we always gave 'em a chivaree. No, I don't know where the word came from, but that's what we called it. It wasn't the custom then to make very lengthy weddin' trips; from the old to the new home, at the head of a long procession of top buggies or cutters, as the season might be, was about the size of it, and the day after the weddin', Mary put on her calico and John his homespun, and the romance dwindled down into solid happiness.

It was the first night at the new home, wherever it might be, that the chivaree took place, and we boys used to make it warm, I tell you.

Well, the night I'm goin' to tell you

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about, a feller by the name of Lem Silver had married a girl from the next concession named Polly Hegadorn, and had brought her home to live with his old folks. Old Cyrene Silver, Lem's father, was a crusty, tight-fisted customer, and none of the boys wasted much love on him. So we had planned, the moment we heard of the approachin' weddin', to wake Uncle Cyrene up a bit and make him shell out five dollars, the customary tip.

Father somehow heard of the threatened chivaree, and on the evenin' in question, after supper, while me an' Ed was sittin' innocent as two lambs by the cook stove, he said to us:

"Boys, I hear there's goin' to be a chivaree up to Cyrene Silver's to-night. Now, I want you to distinctly understand that you're not goin'," and he added as a clincher—"if I ever hear of you attendin' one of them disgraceful affairs, I'll tan your jackets for you."

Then he sat down to read the Christian

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Guardian, while me an' Ed exchanged sly winks, and Jane made eyes at us from across the cook stove.

At eight o'clock we went to bed, solemn as mice, and it wasn't long before we heard father windin' up the clock, puttin' out the dog and lockin' up for the night.

We waited half an hour longer, and then slid out of bed, all dressed, opened the window, crawled out, and scooted up the road to Will Tinker's, where we had previously agreed to meet and black up. Oh, yes, we always blacked up. It wouldn't have been a chivaree done in proper style if we hadn't.

When the crowd was ready we started, with tin horns, cow bells, horse pistols, old army muskets, wash boilers, and every blame thing you can think of as a likely ear-splitter.

At the four corners we met a gang of fellers from the next concession—friends of the bride—rigged out in fantastic garments, and haulin' a small cannon which

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they had borrowed from an Orange lodge for the occasion. They fell in with us readily enough, and together we swooped down on the home of the happy couple.

Will Tinker, who always led us in these chivarees, was chosen to make the speech after the first salute, for he was a natural-born speaker and had a loud voice. So we grouped around him in the front yard, and, at command, began a symphony of tin pans, tin horns, conch shells, and cow bells, with the occasional poppin' of a horse pistol as a variation. It didn't raise a bird! The blinds were closely drawn, and we could only see traces of a dim light in the sittin' room.

Will looked wistfully at the cannon, but resisted the temptation, and ordered another onslaught, with the muskets this time for the climax. You know those old, long, army muskets?—six feet tall an' capable of holdin' a handful of powder? Lord! how they did roar when they came in! One of the firers was kicked clean

THE CHIVAREE

through the front gate out into the road.

But they did the business, for we heard the front door open and saw Uncle Cyrene standin' bare-headed on the stoop. With a wave of the hand, Will Tinker commanded silence, and began his usual speech, flowery as a hot-house and every word a jaw-breaker. But the old man wouldn't listen.

"Shet up, you fool!" he yelled, "and listen to me. I won't stand any of this dum tomfoolery on my premises—do ye hear? And ef the whole pasel of you ain't out o' my yard in one minute, I'll hev ye all up for assault and battery."

"Pay toll or stand treat!" Will hollered back, defiantly.

"Not a cent, or a mug o' cider," Uncle Cyrene replied, and returnin' to the house, slammed the door in our faces.

Then we started to sing a song Ed had made up about Lem and Polly, which we'd all learned by heart. A mighty good song it was, and I wish I could re-

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member a verse or so, but I never could recall the words of a song.

This didn't soothe the troubled waters, and so the leader of the boys from the next concession determined to bring the cannon into play. It was hauled under the window of the sittin' room and loaded to the muzzle; then all stood back while it was fired.

I'll never forget till my dyin' day the noise that cannon made. It just tore things to pieces and broke every pane of glass in the sittin' room window. We were all about scart to death, but it scart old Cyrene worse'n any of us, for he came totterin' out from the front door pale as a sheet, with a five-dollar bill in his hand. He couldn't open his mouth, he was that scart, but we caught a glimpse of Lem and Polly peekin' through the open door, grinnin' from ear to ear; so this cheered us up, and Will delivered his speech, while the old man stood and took it gentle as a kitten.

THE CHIVAREE

We took the five dollars and gave half to the boys from the next concession, hauled the cannon out into the road, fired a partin' salute, and started for home.

Everything so far had gone well, but it wasn't to end so, for just as we got to the four corners, Pete Hawley, one of our fellers, picked a quarrel, as he was always doin', with a boy twice his size from the other crowd, and nothin' would do but they must fight it out. We smaller boys crawled up on a lumber pile beside a cooper shop, to see the fun. Now you must keep this lumber pile in mind, for it had a lot to do with subsequent events. You've all seen the kind of lumber pile it was, I guess—a three-sided, holler affair, you know—the boards overlappin' at each corner, the lumber bein' piled this way to season. It was probably twelve feet high. Anyway, we climbed up to the top board, so as to see the fight, and with us came a long-gear'd boy from the next concession crowd,—one of them growed-in-a-night

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kind of boys. I see him now, sittin' there in the moonlight, his lank knees up to his chin, for his heels was stuck in between the second and third board. Pete Hawley won the fight—he always did—and down we came from our roost and scampered for home.

Me an' Ed was about fagged out, I tell you, when we crawled through the window into our room, and undressin', fell into bed. I never knew a thing after I struck the piller till I heard father's sharp voice from the kitchen,—

“Get up, there, you boys, and tend to your chores.”

I 'rose by instinct, hauled on my trousers, and went out into the kitchen, rubbin' my eyes.

“Didn't I tell you not to go to that chivaree?” was the first words of greetin', an' father was standin' over me with a half-raised stick of stove wood.

“We ain't been to no chivaree,” I mumbled in reply.

THE CHIVAREE

"How dare you lie to me?" he cried.

"I aint lyin', I said, stoutly.

"Oh, I'll warm you boys for this!" he went on; first, for disobeyin' me an' then lyin' about it."

"But, sir," I managed to say, "how could we have gone to the chivaree when we haven't been out of our beds all night."

"Haven't been out of your beds all night!" father cried. "To think that a son of mine should be such a liar!"

I couldn't imagine what made him so positive, for I knew that if he'd missed us durin' the night he would have either gone after us, or been waitin' our return, for with all his apparent harshness, us two boys was the apple of his eye, and he couldn't have slept a wink.

"Come out of there, you!" he shouted at Ed, and I turned an' saw poor Ed come stumblin' from the room, still half asleep, an' diggin' his knuckles into his eyes. The mystery was explained. Ed's face

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was as black as a nigger's, save where the pillar had rubbed some of the stuff off. We had forgot to wash!

I tell you, we got a trouncin' for that affair, and Jane stood in the wood-house door an' bawled in sympathy while we was gettin' it. But pshaw! we didn't mind a little thing like that, and was all over it in an hour.

About the lumber pile? Say! I nearly forgot that, an' it's really the best part of the story.

That was the funniest thing! I can't help laffin' when I think of it. You remember the tall, gawky boy I told you of, who climbed up an' sat beside us durin' the fight? Well, now you know, that boy was lost to sight from that night. His parents went wild, but the other boys couldn't remember where they'd seen him last. He was one of them still, quiet boys, you know,—the kind of feller that just glides along an' never says nothin'. They searched the woods high an' low,

THE CHIVAREE

and even advertised in the papers, but no boy turned up. I never saw the neighborhood so excited.

Me an' Ed could both tell a straight story. We remembered him well climbin' up the lumber pile, an' we left him there when we went home. It was a mystery, and after awhile even his parents gave up lookin'.

Now, where do ye think they found him? You'd never guess. In the middle of that lumber pile, dead as a door-nail! He'd fell over backward an' broke his neck. Did you ever hear the like! Course, me an' Ed felt sorry for him at first, but we didn't know him well, and whenever we'd think of that long, lanky boy sittin' there with his knees in the air, an' all of a sudden tumblin' over backwards into that lumber pile, we couldn't help laffin'. It was funny, I'm darned if it wasn't. But it ended our chivarees for many a long day.

The Schoolmarm

Did I ever tell you about the way we fooled Tish Brown's father's only brother Ebenezer on his own honey? Well, I'll tell you that story after a bit, but I'm goin' to tell you now about Mary Jane Brown, this same Ebenezer's daughter, who once taught school in our neighborhood.

Ebenezer Brown was a mighty religious man, bein' a steward in the church, the same as father, an' when Mary Jane got her certificate an' went for a schoolmarm, it worried her father terrible for fear she'd forget the strict rules of conduct he'd laid down to her at home.

It so happened that she was chosen to teach in the little red schoolhouse in our neighborhood, and as this was only a few miles from her home, you'd hardly think

THE SCHOOLMARM

that Ebenezer would have thought that his darlin' daughter had gone far away from him into the wide, sinful world, but he did.

Father was head trustee, an' it was the custom for the teacher to start her round of boardin' with us. So, the day after New Year's, Ebenezer fetched Mary Jane an' her trunk to our place, and handed her over gingerly to mother. Then he found father in the drive-house an' said to him, very solemn :

"Stephen, I've brought Mary Jane to stop with you a spell, an' it's mighty glad I'd be of placin' her in your care an' that of your excellent wife but for one thing."

"What's that?" father asked, sharply, as was his way.

"Well, you see," Ebenezer went on, "Mary Jane's my one ewe lamb, an' I've bin terrible particklar about her bringin' up, an' if I do say it of my own child, she jest simply don't know that there's sich a thing as sin in the world."

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"You don't mean me to infer, Ebenezer," father said, most taken off his feet, "that my house ain't a fit place for your daughter?"

"Nothin' of the sort, nothin' of the sort," returned Ebenezer, winkin' his little eyes as if he'd caught a cinder. He was the worse man to wink his eyes you ever see. "I know you, Stephen, to the backbone," he went on, "an' I've allus said if there was one woman more worthy than another to take the blessed sacrament it was your wife; but it's the boys, George an' Ed, that I'm afraid of."

"What of them?" father asked, for he was techy on the subject of me an' Ed, and for all he would dress us down himself for every little thing, he didn't relish listenin' to other folks doin' it.

"George an' Ed are bright boys, I own," Ebenezer answered, cautious like; "but the truth is, Stephen, that since they've growed up to what might be called young men, they've been considerably

THE SCHOOLMARM

talked about, I understand, not only in this neighborhood, but as far away as our section. You do let 'em go about considerable, you can't deny that, Stephen; an' I've even heard that they've a rig apiece an' drive out to wait on girls of a Sunday, jest as if they was courtin'. Why, only last Sunday George was down to see my brother's girl, Letitia."

"I don't see anything very wicked in that," father said, dryly.

"But that ain't it," continued Ebenezer, evidently with a load on his mind. "Folks say they go to dances an' public parties; and, while far be it from me to say what other folk's children should be 'lowed to do, I want it distinctly understood that my Mary Jane shall never dance a step while I live. So I ask you, Stephen, as brother Christian to brother, to keep an eye on the boys an' see that they don't put any wild notions in Mary Jane's head."

They had some more talk, but that was

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the substance of it, and father lectured me an' Ed for an hour in the barn, where we all sat huskin' corn, on the strength of it.

Now, it kind of riled me an' Ed to be raked over the coals by old Ebenezer Brown, who had the reputation of tradin' horses not strictly on points, and we made up our minds to give Mary Jane a good lettin' alone, although she was a kind of cute little thing, an' we both liked her.

We was now long about twenty and eighteen, me an' Ed, and we liked a good time as well as the next one. Ed had learned to play the fiddle, and as I could "call off" fine, we was in great demand at all the dances for as much as five miles around home.

There was lots of dances that winter, and we went to most of 'em. It's true, we only had one cutter between us, but we used to take turns usin' it, and the unfortunate one had to drive his girl in a light market sleigh we had.

THE SCHOOLMARM

Mary Jane saw us goin' and comin' from these parties, and as her cousin Tish used to tell her everything, she knew we was goin' to dances, an' that I took Tish every time we could fix up a yarn that would deceive the latter's father.

Mary Jane got restless after a bit, seein' so much fun goin' on under her nose an' her not in it. So she up and says to me one day, when I'd picked her up at the schoolhouse on my way from the village, and was drivin' her home:

"George," she says, "I hear there's goin' to be a party down to Jones's Mills next Friday evenin'."

"I've heard so, too," I says, wonderin' what she was drivin' at.

"What kind of a party is it goin' to be?" she says.

"Church of England," I says. "A kind of house-warmin' at the Stevens's for the English Church. They set a box near the door, an' you can drop in what you like."

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"Oh, is that all," says Mary Jane, mournful like. "Tish told me it was goin' to be a dance."

"Tish is a great talker," I says.

Now, it struck me that Mary Jane seemed quite cast down when I didn't give her any encouragement in the matter of the party. She sat silent for a bit, an' then she put up her face, bashful like (she was a mighty pretty girl when she looked like that), and said :

"It's awful stupid of me stayin' home every night, and Tish and you an' Ed and the rest of the young folks havin' such good times. I just said so to Tish, and she said to me, 'Mary Jane, you're a little fool for bein' so timid. Why don't you ask George to take you?' There, now!"

"Not to a dance!" says I, horrified.

"But this ain't goin' to be a dance; just a party," she pleaded.

"Well," says I, "It's just like this, Mary Jane: Your father would have a

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fit if he heard of you goin' anywhere with me or Ed. We're bad, wicked boys, to him," I says.

"Pshaw!" she says, smilin' up at me. "Father's an old fossil, that's what he is, and haven't I known you an' Ed for years, and don't Tish go with you everywhere?"

It occurred to me right there an' then that Mary Jane had been very much underestimated by me an' Ed, and I decided that if she wanted to go to the Church of England party, I'd take her an' let old Ebenezer go to the deuce. So says I:

"Mary Jane, if you want to go next Friday evenin', get ready for it an' I'll take you, though I half promised to take Tish, and it's Ed's turn for the cutter."

"Tish won't mind; she said she wouldn't," Mary Jane says in return, and I saw that Tish had been puttin' notions into her good little cousin's head.

I tried to buy Ed off on the cutter, but

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it wouldn't go, for he had a new girl in mind for the party, and wanted to go in style. Ed was mighty selfish about the cutter when it was his turn. But to make matters worse, what does father an' mother decide to do but go visitin' on Friday, sayin' they won't be home till long in the evenin', and they knew me an' Ed intended goin' to the party!

Ed laughed an' Mary Jane cried when they heard of this last stroke; but I wasn't to be beat, 'specially when Mary Jane felt so bad about it, and had worked all the week on her dress.

So when father an' mother drove off, I cleaned out the big bob-sleigh—the box was eighteen inches high and ten feet long,—filled it half full of clean rye straw, fixed the seat comfortable, and decided to hitch in the span an' drive Mary Jane to the party. I knew I could sneak the bobs into the Church shed where none of the other fellers would be likely to spot me, for we was mighty sensitive on the point

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of our turnouts in them days, I tell you.

We got to the party all right, and I see that Mary Jane was enjoyin' every minute of it. They had all kinds of games—good old games they was—that took the bashfulness out of a feller; and the schoolmarm went into it, blushin' but happy.

Long about 'leven o'clock the older folks began to leave for home, and I saw Ed goin' into the big dinin' room with his fiddle under his arm. I knew the trouble was about to begin, for you know all these Church of England parties was sure to end up in a dance.

I found Mary Jane talkin' with Will Tinker an' eatin' a big apple, and I called her to one side.

"Mary Jane," I says, very polite like, "it's goin' on midnight, and some of the folks are beginnin' to leave. Don't you think you'd better be makin' a move towards puttin' on your things?"

"Dear me, George!" she cried, "you

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don't say it's so late! I'd have guessed ten at the latest."

At that moment I heard Ed draw the bow across his fiddle, tunin' up, and it fairly made my heart ache.

"Must we really be goin'?" says Mary Jane, plaintive like, not pretendin' to have heard the fiddle.

"To tell the truth," says I, solemn as a judge, "I'm surprised at this party. They're turnin' it into a dance, I'm afraid!"

Mary Jane looked horrified. "We must go home!" she said

I don't know whether it showed in my face or not, but I did hate like a dog to leave when the fun was just commencin', and I knew that Will Tinker would be only too glad to get a chance of callin' off. Mary Jane evidently saw my distress, for says she:

"George, you don't want to go."

"To be honest," says I, "Mary Jane, I don't."

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“Couldn’t I just stand an’ look on?” she says.

My spirits rose. “Yes,” says I, “you can if you only will, but your father’ll skin you if he ever hears of it.”

“Pshaw!” says she with that darin’ twinkle of the eye. “I guess I’m safe with you, George.”

The dance began. I called off the square an’ the round dances, and danced all the waltzes an’ polkas. Mary Jane sat in a chair near the dinin’ room door, and every time I passed her she smiled up at me just as happy as a kitten.

Durin’ an intermission, while Ed was eatin’ cake with his new girl (and a daisy she was—I’d never seen her before), I went over an’ set down by Mary Jane.

“Ain’t it lovely to know how to dance,” says she, all aglow. “Oh, if I only knew how!”

“It’s nothin’ to learn,” says I.

“Do you think I could learn?” says she, earnest like.

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"Can a duck swim?" says I, laughin'.

"Really," says she, "do you think I could if I tried?"

Just then the fiddle started up a waltz. I grabbed Mary Jane.

"Come!" says I. "Now's your chance," and we was soon flyin' round to the music. She was a born dancer. In two whirls she caught the step an' was right with me. Did she like it? Well, I never saw a happier girl, and I danced every remainin' dance with her, lettin' Will Tinker get all the glory he wanted callin' off.

We started for home at two in the mornin'. The weather had changed in the night, and a sharp wind was blowin', bringin' with it a fine sleet that stung the face like needle pricks. We stood it for a mile or so, but I see it was punishin' Mary Jane terrible, so I set the seat back three feet or so, and told her to sit down in the nice dry straw an' lean against the seat. Then I tied the reins 'round the dashboard, knowin' the horses would

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go home all right, and sittin' down by the schoolmarm, pulled the buffalo robe over our heads, and there we was, comfortable as could be, holdin' hands like the two babes in the woods.

Then a peculiar thing happened. I heard the bell of a far-away Church ringin'; then a voice callin' to me from a high hill—just the murmur of a voice—then a slow poundin'—a dull, thumpin' sound; then the voice from the hill comin' nearer an' nearer, growin' louder an' louder, till I felt my blood rushin' into my head and my ears fairly deafened with the noise. The voice was now directly over me. I opened my eyes. The buffalo robe was held aloft and I heard father say,—

“Well, if this don't beat all!”

I looked about me. The bob-sleigh with the horses still hitched to it was in the drive-house at home, and father was standin' by the side with one corner of the buffalo robe in his hand. It was broad daylight. I looked for Mary Jane. There

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she sat in the straw, her head against the cushion of the seat, sound asleep, but still hangin' tight to my left hand.

"Now, sir," says father with a grin, "what does this mean?"

It was enough to make even him smile. Me an' Mary Jane had gone to sleep the minute almost we sat down in the straw, for neither of us could remember a thing, and the horses brought us home, goin' into the drive-house, the doors of which had luckily been left open. Father comin' out in the mornin' found the bob-sleigh there, and liftin' the robe discovered the two of us.

Say! Mary Jane wouldn't look at me out of the corner of her eye for the next fortnight.

The Colt with the Tough Mouth

If there's one thing in life which I've enjoyed more than any other, it's been the drivin' of fiery horses. I've never yet met the horse which proved itself my master, and to-day, old as I am, I'd try a fall with the ugliest horse you could produce. I've been run away with time an' time again, but the most damage I ever see done in a runaway was caused by a three-year-old colt, behind which me an' Tish Brown went to meetin' at Milton one Sunday evenin' in winter, years an' years ago, when I was still a young feller on the old farm.

I traded for this colt (he was a big black, with three white feet an' a star between his eyes) with a Gipsy who came along our

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way. I was always tradin' horses, and as I never got the worse of the bargain, father became used to it after awhile, and never went into the stable positive that he'd find there the same lot of horses he'd last seen.

I gave the Gipsy a bay mare and five bags of oats for the black colt, and I thought I'd made my fortune, for a handsomer colt you never rubbed your hands over. He went well, single or double, and would walk ahead of a plough like the grand marshal of a 'lection parade. He only had two faults,—he'd run away at the drop of the hat, and his mouth was that hard that ten men couldn't hold him in when he stretched out his neck and decided to take charge of the subsequent proceedin's.

But I liked that horse for the very pride of him an' the devil in his eyes. I soon discovered that he was just as gentle as a lamb as long as his neck kept well curved an' he felt the reins was in strong hands; but if he ever got a chance to straighten

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out his neck he wouldn't do a thing but look about for something to happen which would give him a fair excuse to go up in the air. An ordinary double wire bit was of no earthly use on that colt, so I got for him a curb bit with a camel's hump in the middle, that, properly applied, would make him set down in the road and ask for mercy.

Father swore the colt would be the death of me, and he positively forbid Ed to draw a rein on him, and Ed wasn't any too anxious, 'specially as just then he was courtin' a girl from the next concession—the same girl I told you he took to the Church of England sociable,—and the courtin' was in such an advanced condition that he could only spare one hand for drivin', and old Darby was good enough for him.

But there was one person besides me who wasn't afraid to ride behind the black colt, and that was Tish Brown. Tish was 'fraid of nothin', and she fell in love with

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the colt at first sight. I let her drive him once before I got the curb bit, and do you know, she couldn't bend her elbows for nigh a week, but she held him in, all the same.

The curb bit, however, done the business, and there wasn't a peaceabler horse from that time on in the neighborhood. When I'd hitch him up and trip the curb into his mouth, he'd look at me humble like, just as much as to say, "Now, George, for the love of Heaven, do have a care how hard you yank on the lines."

That winter they was holdin' protracted meetin's down to Milton, and it was considered quite the proper thing to drive your best girl there at least Sunday night. Me an' Tish wasn't any too partic'lar about goin', but the old folks insisted on our representin' the family, and the old man's word was law, 'specially when I was feedin' my horse on his oats a couple of nights each week.

Me an' Ed both havin' a girl, it natur-

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ally left Jane out in the cold, for father considered she was too young to have a beau, much to her sorrow, as there was two or three of the neighbors' boys peekin' through the pickets at her; for Jane, if I do say it, was by long odds the prettiest girl in the neighborhood, her cheeks goin' pink an' white at a word; and her eyes—well, her husband ain't got over lovin' her to this day.

Jane consequently was eternally naggin' at me an' Ed to take her out with us once an' a while, but we couldn't quite see it her way just then. She'd never seen Ed's girl, but she knew Tish an' hated her from the first, though there was absolutely no sense in her doin' so. But hate her she did, and she was eternally wishin' the black colt would spill her out some time to her undoin'. Jane was a little Tartar, I tell you, an' mighty nigh she come to havin' her wish, as I'm goin' to tell you.

Well, this Sunday I hitched up the black colt to the cutter an' drove over to

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Tish's for supper. After the meal we drove down to Milton as usual an' put the colt in the shed.

The whole neighborhood was out that night, for a preacher from the city was to lead the meetin,' and it was looked upon as a grand round-up of fractious sinners, and of course everybody was anxious to see who the city preacher would corral.

I don't remember much about the meetin'. Me an' Tish was in our favorite seat just behind the choir, and we usually found enough to interest us in the gossipin' back and forth of the young people about us, without botherin' about the sermon, for we was in about everything in them days.

When meetin' was out we chatted at the Church door awhile, and then I drove round the horse, got Tish in an' started for home. I noticed something was wrong the minute we shot out the gate, for the black colt give his old defiant snort an' began lookin' about for something to scare him.

"Hi! there, my boy!" I cried to him,

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and he settled down into a good smart trot. I never pulled him very hard now, for I knew the power of that curb bit.

When we turned Granger's Corners we had a straight way before us for about two miles, and it was my custom to let the black colt show his oats on this stretch. However, the snow was deep on both sides of the road, there bein' only one track; and while we'd dallied at the Church door the old folks had got started, and the road was well dotted with rigs ahead of us, so I judged it best to go cautious.

Right in front of us old Zenas Furr was humpin' along through the pitch-holes in an aggravatin' way, so I turned out to pass him. Our cutter ripped through the snow as we went by, and just as we got into the track again a partridge rose out of the snow and whizzed into the woods. That was enough for the black colt. He gave one wild snort an' straightened out for a run.

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“Hang on to him, George!” Tish cried.

“You bet your life!” I replied between my teeth, takin’ in the slack of the reins an’ leanin’ forward for a steady pull.

I pulled, but the curb bit had lost its terrors for the black colt. It just shot out into the air like an express engine, and before I knew it—rip! rip!—crash! We had passed a cutter an’ cut off its rail as slick as if we’d been a circular saw, and was poundin’ madly ahead through the pitch-holes.

Tish let out one wild laugh, and, as her hat went back from her head, hangin’ to her neck by the strings, she grabbed hold of the lines with me, and we put our combined weight on the bit. But it had no effect whatever.

Lord! how we did get over the snow! Talk about your runnin’ horses! That black colt did record work that night, and every few hundred yards or so we cut into the side of somebody’s cutter

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and tossed its occupants into the snow. The blame colt would turn out to go by just so we'd slice somethin' from every rig we passed.

Me an' Tish was now yellin' like wild Injuns to warn the people ahead, and they turned out into the snow banks the best they could to let us past.

But it worried me terrible because that bit had no effect. I gritted my teeth an' gave the colt the reins, hopin' he'd take his jaws from the bit, for I suspected he'd in some impossible manner got it between his teeth. Then I began to saw an' yank, but the colt went ahead. We went round the last corner into the home stretch fairly in the air, for if the cutter had been touchin', it couldn't possibly have helped slattin' us over the road fence.

I turned an' looked at Tish. Her eyes was out on her cheeks an' she was coiled up ready for a header into the snow without notice.

"Look out for the gate post, George,

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when we turn in home!" she cried, and I did, but that colt was runnin' away in a mighty sane-headed way, for he curved out for the gate an' made as pretty a turn as ever you see.

I seen a face at the parlor window as we flew by. It was Jane's. The colt hauled up with a jerk, that nearly sent us over the dashboard, directly before the drive-house door an' stood there, pantin', of course, but entirely rational.

"Is that you, George?" came Jane's voice from the kitchen door.

"I s'pose so," I says, "but I aint half sure."

"You'd ought to be careful an' not turn into the gate so fast!" Jane cried.

"Oh, don't worry about me," I called back. "I know how to drive," and I nudged Tish.

I now crept carefully from the cutter an' felt along the rail for damages, for I'd about as soon have broken my neck as damaged that cutter, it bein' a new one

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that father had traded for, the precedin' winter. It was dark in the shadow of the drive-house, and I couldn't very well see, but I satisfied myself that while there might be scratches, there was no broken pieces, and I whispered the news to Tish.

Then I went to the black colt's head, speakin' softly to him, for I wasn't sure that he wouldn't take a notion to go for a flyin' trip up through the orchard.

He rubbed his nose against me an' seemed to be in no way worried by the memory of past events. I felt for the curb bit. It was in his mouth all right, and he chewed on it contentedly.

"Well, I'll be darned!" I said.

"What's the matter, George?" Tish whispered hoarsely.

"The bit's in his mouth all right," says I.

"Then what have we been pullin' on?" says Tish.

I felt for the lines an' found 'em

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buckled to the head-stall! We'd been pullin' on the black colt's head an' not on his mouth, for some darn cuss had unbuckled the lines from the bit an' fastened 'em to the head-stall.

"It's a put-up job!" I whispered to Tish, "and we've ripped up every other cutter in the neighborhood!"

I fastened the lines to the bit again, got back into the cutter an' turned round, the black colt movin' like a lamb, now that he felt the curb.

"Where are you goin' now?" called Jane, who was still standin' in the kitchen door.

"Just takin' Tish home," I called back. "I come away without my horse-blanket, and so I run in here after it."

When I'd dropped Tish at her front gate I didn't wait for an hour's sparkin' by the sittin'-room stove as usual, but made tracks for home, anxious to hear what Ed an' father knew about the wrecks along the way from meetin'.

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There was excitement enough, I assure you, and would you believe it, father an' mother, in the market sleigh, was one of the rigs we passed. All they had lost, however, was a piece of the rail.

"Where was you when all this was happenin'?" father says to me.

"Oh, we must have been ahead of you all," I replied, matter-of-fact. "I jogged along here so's to get my horse-blanket, but I didn't need it after all."

"Who do you think it was?" says Jane, quite eager.

"I couldn't just swear to who it was," says father. "The feller had either a black or a white horse, I ain't sure which; I think it was a white. But it wasn't any of our neighbor boys, for both him an' the hussy with him was drunk as fools an' yellin' like fiends. I never see a more disgraceful affair, all of a Sunday evenin', too."

That runaway was the talk of the whole section that winter. Over ten cutters was

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more or less wrecked, and the voice of wailin' was loud in the land.

I was never suspected for a moment, though Jane did watch me pretty close for awhile, but even she lost suspicion in time, for who ever heard of turnin' round a runaway horse and drivin' him off as gentle as a lamb?

The commonly-accepted version of the affair was that some drunken feller an' his girl was the occupants of the runaway rig, and as Tish knew how to keep a secret, the truth never leaked out. But Jane's husband years afterwards confessed to tyin' the black colt's reins in to the head-stall, Jane havin' put him up to it in hopes that me an' Tish would get a good tossin' into the snow!

I tell you, none of us stopped to think of consequences in them days.

Scarin' the Duke

Long 'bout the time of the Fenian Raid the children round our way became so timid on account of the terrible stories told about that awful monster, the Wild Irishman, that they was afraid to go to bed without a candle, and the excitement so worked on their nerves that at the least sudden surprise they'd spring up an' holler as if by instinct. Even big boys like me an' Ed was at that time would tread very gingerly when passin' along the road by the big woods, for the most alarmin' rumors was afloat, and we didn't know what minute the Wild Irishman would spring out upon us, for he was a mighty real phantom to us, I tell you.

Why, not fifteen miles from our home the soldiers found about fifty rifles in a

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load of hay which an Irish farmer was pretendin' to take to market, and in consequence we come to believe that every Irishman in the country was in league with the bloody cut-throats from across the Line, who was threatenin' invasion of our quiet country.

But to get back to my story: Me an' Ed was both credulous youngsters, and old Abe Amey used to tell us such harrowin' tales, that we was on the raw edge of a panic half the time.

I remember we was goin back after the cows one evenin', and it required all our nerve to go over the crossway in the dusk, I swanny! The crossway was a road through a swamp from the front pasture to the burnt lands. It was originally a log road, but the logs had sunk into the mud, and father had it filled in with gravel, the stones bein' very hard an' sharp.

When goin' over this crossway, me an' Ed (we always went barefoot them days)

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would pick our way over the log ends to avoid the stones, and we was always happy when we discovered the cows in the front pasture, for the swamp was a place of terror to be passed an' the burnt lands was even worse.

If you never was a boy an' never went after the cows of a cloudy evenin', and never see witches an' ghosts an' murderers pokin' their ugly heads round the corners, or through the middle of black, twisted, pine stumps, you don't know the rudiments of the sensation called bein' scart to death! Me an' Ed would start out bold enough, for Jane would generally go with us to the little hill above the orchard, at the end of the lane, and then, after makin' us promise not to move for five minutes, turn back an' streak it for home as fast as her legs could carry her. Nothin' on earth could have tempted her to go further than the end of the lane, and she thought me an' Ed was heroes of a wonderful sort.

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After the last flicker of Jane's white feet as she turned into the gate near the drive-house, us boys would start back with faces bold as brass, but with hearts fairly turnin' sick with fear. We knew we had to go back after them cows, and while we fully believed that one night or another the Wild Irishman would certainly get us an' eat us alive, just as Abe Amey told us, yet we daren't own up to father an' ourselves that we was cowards. So we fairly pushed ourselves back toward the swamp an' its horrors.

Now an' then an owl would send out a shrill hoot, and me an' Ed would shiver all over an' then look sheepishly at each other, quick like, to see if the other had noticed the jump. I always thought that Ed was a perfect hero, and I knew myself to be a sneakin' coward, and I guess Ed had similar ideas in regard to him an' me, only in his case I was the hero an' he the coward.

Anyway, we got along to the crossway

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all right, and passed over it with no more'n half a dozen frights. The cows was in the far corner of the burnt lands, as we knew from the bells. So we had to pass the whole array of monster stumps!

We thought it no shame now to hold hands an' go on tiptoe, lookin' straight ahead an' sideways at the same time.

There was one twisted stump which had scart us many a time. In the twilight it always looked as if a man's head an' right shoulder was pushed cautiously out from one side. The man had thick hair, a full beard and ferocious eyes. Many's the time we'd stood spellbound lookin' at this bug-a-boo, and even after lookin' the stump over by daylight, it was impossible for us to pass it boldly. This evenin' we hauled up before it with a jerk.

"It's a sure enough man this time!" Ed whispered, and I could feel him tremblin' all over.

I confess I was actually too scart to open my mouth. The head an' shoulders was

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there the same as usual, but the eyes was brighter, and do you believe it, I could plainly see the man's right hand clutchin' an axe! I could hardly believe my eyes, but there could be no mistake. There was the handle plain as day, and the glitterin' axe poised ready to strike.

I looked at Ed an' he at me. Our faces was thin an' pale. We just stood there an' quaked for about two minutes, and then with a yell turned an' lit out for home. You never see such runnin' in all your life. We went over logs three feet high as if they was nothin'. We bounded as if on springs. We literally flew. Just before we come to the crossway, Ed turned his head an' looked over his shoulder. He let out a yell that would scare the dead, and shrieked:

“George, look what's comin'!”

I looked, and at the same moment jumped fully ten feet forward. Not fifty feet behind come boundin' along a snakey-lookin' thing with a big black head, that

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every other moment leaped into the air.

We didn't pick our way over the cross-way. Right through the middle of it we went, and our bare feet never felt the sharp stones, for we couldn't turn our heads now without seein' that reptile behind us. But it didn't seem to gain, and when we struck the new pasture, I dared to say to Ed:—

We're gainin' on it, don't you think?"

We certainly was gainin' on it, for its head grew smaller an' smaller, and when we got to the lane we found it had entirely disappeared. Then we slowed down to get our breath, and when we'd come to a stop, Ed felt somethin' draggin' from his pocket, and found it was a piece of yarn.

Have you guessed what it was? Yes, that's right. The boundin' snake was just Ed's yarn ball that had worked from his pocket an' unravelled as he ran, the ball bouncin' along for all the world like a snake.

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We didn't feel half so sheepish over this as you might think, for we was not out of our troubles yet. The yarn ball had looked like a snake, and we'd been fooled, but, by gravy! the man with the axe was no joke! We could swear to the axe. Nothin' on earth but an axe could that be what we'd seen. We was just as certain that the Wild Irishman was behind the stump as that we was two scart boys; and we knew, too, that the cows was in the burnt fields an' that it was milkin' time. What was we to do!

"Ed," says I, "we've got to get them cows."

"I just can't go back there again," says Ed. "I ain't goin' to be killed by the Wild Irishman if I never see the cows!" he says.

"But father'll whale us if we go home without 'em," I says.

Ed hesitated. The one thing he was mortally sure of was that whalin'. The Irishman might or might not kill him,

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but he knew positive that bein' scared wouldn't weigh a feather with father, and that a lickin' was sure.

"We'll have to go back," he said, and shivered.

Then I began to hedge. "S'pose we say we couldn't find 'em?" I says.

"It's no use," says Ed. "He'll know better."

We turned an' retraced our steps.

Now, I've never been much of a hero in my own eyes. I never felt I could do my family justice if called out for a soldier; but do you know, I've always felt proud of myself an' Ed for goin' back that night.

It was fairly dark when we got to the crossway, and our jaws was tight shut. We didn't tremble now; we was feelin' numb. I didn't know whether I was walkin' on stones or moss. Night-hawks was whirlin' an' shriekin' overhead, and the swamp seemed alive with owls; but on we went, holdin' hands an' grittin' our

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teeth. Presently we heard the cow bells. We stopped to listen. Yes, sure enough, the cows was comin' towards us. We stood like two statues, drawn up rigid, our ears open. Soon old Limeback, the leader, swung into view, and trailin' after her was the rest of the herd. Seein' us, Limeback stopped, curved her neck an' looked at us, and then with a toss of her head as much as to say, "Why, it's them boys," moved on.

Father met us at the head of the lane.

"What kept you so long?" he asked, sharply.

I squeezed Ed's hand an' Ed squeezed back.

"The cows was hard to find, sir," I said.

Two-thirds of all the lies I've told in my life I told to father.

But this ain't what I set out to tell you at all. I wanted to tell you not how me an' Ed was scared, but how we scart the Duke.

SCARIN' THE DUKE

The Duke was a neighbor boy whose right name was Wellington Benn. Jane nicknamed him the Duke because he was so utterly unlike his famous namesake. The Duke was a real bona fide coward,—one of the snivellin', cryin' kind,—and a boy only half as big could bluff him off the playground. He wouldn't fight, but he'd talk back as long as he dared, and a mighty mean tongue he had. We all hated him, but Jane worst of all, and do you know, he was real fond of Jane.

Well, one winter night in them Fenian times I've been tellin' you about, me an' Ed went down to get scart by old Abe Amey. Why we went I don't know, 'cept it was fascination, for Abe was a natural-born story teller, an' he knew all the news about the Fenians—where an' when they would land,—and he had every man, woman an' child in Canada burnt at the stake before our eyes.

Why, one night he was yarnin' this way to a lot of us, and his stories was so

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blood curdlin' that he got excited himself, and takin' down a long musket he had hangin' on the wall, he said, his eyes flashin':—

“Jest let a Fenian step his foot through my gate an' I'll spile his pictur' fer him, by Jerooshy!”

Just then, as luck would have it, we heard a stealthy step goin' round the corner of the house. Abe leaped to the door, hauled off an' let fire, kerbang! We heard somethin' give a grunt, and drop. It was Abe's pet Jersey cow! He set right down an' cried over it, but he didn't let up on his stories on account of it.

Well, this night Abe filled me an' Ed up with all we wanted, and we started to walk home. It was a bright winter's night an' we wasn't much afraid, for there was no woods near.

Ed wore a big buffalo overcoat that father had. It was twice too big for him, but he liked to wear it, kinder to show off, I guess. The collar went up over

SCARIN' THE DUKE

his head an' the sleeves came over his hands.

As we trudged along we heard some one comin' down the road. You can hear approachin' footsteps a long ways on the frozen snow. This might be the Wild Irishman, or more likely only a neighbor, but we was takin' no chances them days, and we crawled over the fence and hid behind it to let the stranger pass. Nearer an' nearer the figure come, an' we soon see it was no Fenian, but only the Duke.

Quick as a flash it occurred to me that here was a fine opportunity to scare the Duke half to death, and I whispered my plan to Ed.

He saw it at once, and just as the Duke got opposite us I made a growl as deep as I could an' Ed went over the fence on all fours just like a bear. And say! do you know, he looked so darn savage in that big buffalo coat, springin' up from the snow, that I never blamed the Duke for bein' scart.

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Was the Duke scart? Scart ain't no name for it. He let out one yell an' went down in the road in a heap as Ed sprang at him. He was kickin' in a fit when I reached him, and I'm blamed if the feller recovered consciousness for two days.

We lugged him as far as our place an' then father drove him home.

"I never see anything like it," says Ed to Jane as earnest as a judge,—“I never see anything like it. Me an' George was comin' along whistlin' as natural as could be, when we hears a yell in front of us an' the Duke goes into a fit. I wonder what could have ailed him!”

“P'raps he saw his shadder!” says Jane, dryly. “The Duke ain't no hero.”

“May be,” says Ed, “but I never see the like of it.”

The Remarkable Taste of Ebenezer Brown

A man makes a mistake when he convinces himself that he's so expert in certain things that he can't make a mistake. I used to think, for instance, that the man didn't live that could beat me tradin' horses. I honestly believed that I knowed every ailin' that a horse was subject to, and that in a two-mile drive I could tell what a horse was good for as well as if I'd raised that horse from a colt. But it cost me a hundred-dollar colt an' twenty dollars to boot to discover that a wind-broken, worthless horse'll travel for ten miles at a round trot, with his head in the air, on a pint of shot judiciously administered. Why, I've seen—but that's neither here nor there.

Ebenezer Brown's pride was his sense

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of taste. Ebenezer was not a bettin' man, he bein' a steward in the Church; but if he'd been a bettin' man, he'd have wagered his farm any time that he could tell the various ingredients in a spoonful of honey just by puttin' it to his lips. He'd been born an' brought up with bees, and he knew their habits like a book.

But it was his boast that you could blindfold him an' place him where you would, and he could tell just how much clover, wild blossoms, flowers an' buckwheat was in any sample of honey that might be presented to him. He despised buckwheat honey; wouldn't have an acre of buckwheat on his farm, and considered it an unfriendly act if any of his neighbors sowed buckwheat within travellin' distance of his bees.

Spring blossom an' clover honey was the only kind he wanted, and he was mighty particular to harvest his honey each year before buckwheat was in bloom, so that if by chance his bees showed such

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bad taste as to gather any of the brown buckwheat nectar, they could eat it themselves durin' the winter an' not force it on him.

He certainly had a remarkable taste, but as I said before, we all come to the time when we're brought face to face with the fact that we're not above mistakes, and me an' Ed was the means of takin' Ebenezer down a peg in his own estimation, though I've always wished we hadn't done it, for the old man never seemed as light-hearted afterwards.

It was this way: When Ebenezer's daughter Mary Jane finished her year of school teachin' in our section, her father 'lowed that the amount of her salary was not sufficient to overbalance his worryin' about her bein' led into temptation, so he took her back home.

Ed hadn't said much to Mary Jane when she was under his nose, but as soon as she'd retired to private life an' Ebenezer loomed up as a dragon, keepin' her

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in confinement, Ed took a notion that Mary Jane was a very desirable girl to be sociable with, and he forthwith began to pay her all the attention circumstances permitted of.

This suited Mary Jane down to the ground, for she thought Ed was about right, and his fiddle playin' completely charmed her. But the dragon, Ebenezer, was a stickler. He forbid Mary Jane havin' beaux. He wanted no young men foolin' 'round his daughter,—no, siree; and he wouldn't have it.

Ed didn't mind this in the least, for he liked excitement, and he stood in solid with mother Brown. She thought the sun rose an' set in Ed, for when he laid himself out you could fairly see the wings tryin' to break through his coat. So when Ebenezer wasn't home, Ed was there, and many's the time he's sparked with Mary Jane in the parlor when Ebenezer was sleepin' the sleep of the just, and Mrs. Brown beside him on guard.

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Tish Brown, who was Mary Jane's cousin, as I've told you, aided an' abetted all this. Me an' Tish was thick as we could be without bein' actually engaged. Tish was a likely girl, I tell you. I've never seen her equal, and she might have been my wife to-day but for the meanest trick I ever heard of bein' played on a couple. It's really worth tellin'.

One night in summer me an' Tish was drivin' home from meetin' in a new piano-box buggy I'd just bought, and it bein' a quiet, balmy kind of evenin' we let the horse go his own gait, and got to passin' back an' forth some pretty sweet remarks. I told Tish how much I thought of her, and she wasn't at all backward in ownin' up that she thought I was about as near the specification as a feller needed to be. I said to Tish frankly that I believed she was the prettiest girl in the two concessions, and she owned that since I'd got a mustache there wasn't a feller anywhere's around as could hold a candle to me. I

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allowed that, not exceptin' Jane, who Tish knew was a truly remarkable cook, she was the star artist in gettin' up a tasty meal, and Tish allowed that her father had said that I knew more about scientific farmin' than any other young man in the county.

We run on this way, gettin' pretty spooney, as you may guess, but we reached her home before I'd nerved myself up to the poppin' point.

Along the middle of the followin' week I met a feller by the name of Reub Tompkins down at Milton. Me an' Reub was old friends and had always known each other. Somehow or other he turned the conversation on to Tish Brown.

"I was up to Tish's last evenin'," he says.

"How was they all?" I says.

"Good—first-rate," he says," and then he laughs.

"What are you grinnin' at?" says I.

"Oh, nothin'," he says, and then he

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says, slappin' me on the back : " George," he says, " I don't know but what you're pretty near all right. Since you grewed your mustache, George," he says, " there ain't a feller anywhere's around as can hold a candle to you ! "

" What's this you're givin' me ? " I says, feelin' pretty foolish.

" George," he says with a grin, " I've heard father say you knowed more about scientific farmin' than any other young man in the county ! "

The blood rushed to my face in a flame, and with a pretty strong word I turned on my heel an' walked away.

" To think," says I to myself, my blood boilin', " that Tish 'ud go to work an' tell every word I said to her to Reub Tompkins ! "

I don't believe I was ever madder in my life. All the love I ever had for the girl turned to hate in me, and I could have stamped her under my feet for makin' me the laughin' stock of the two concessions.

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I'd never heard of a girl playin' a feller as dirty a trick as that. What a girl an' her beau say to one another is sacred; always was an' always will be; but here was Tish, my brave old Tish—my handsome Tish—who I'd knowed from a baby an' who always seemed to like me—goin' an' givin' me dead away to Reub Tompkins, a feller she barely knew!

“That settles Tish Brown for me!” says I, and I never went near her for a month. Then I met her at a strawberry festival. I thought she'd be after me for an explanation, and then I could tell her what I thought of her; but no, sir! She passed me by with her head in the air like a queen, and I never spoke to her again for nigh on twenty years.

I'd lost most of my hair an' was a mighty different-lookin' feller than I once was when I run across her, but she knew me. I own I had no idea who the pale-lookin' woman was who grabbed me by the arm an' said:—

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“George, don’t you know me?”

I looked hard, and then it come on me who it was.

“Tish!” I cried, and my heart was in my throat.

“Yes, it’s me!” she said. “Old an’ homely an’ broken down as you see me, but the same old Tish at heart.”

We went into the City Hotel parlor an’ sat down to talk it over. The first words she said was,—

“George, it was all a mistake!”

I knew what she meant.

“I might have knowed it,” I said. “But,” said I, “how the mischief, Tish, did Reub Tompkins know every word that you said to me that night we drove home from Milton, if you didn’t tell him?”

“I’ll tell you, George,” Tish replied, with a sad, little smile, “if you’ll tell me how Reub Tompkins knew every word that you said to me on the same occasion, if you did’nt tell him.”

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“Great Scott! Tish!” I cried, “you don’t mean to tell me after all these years that Reub told you the same’s he did me?”

“I do!” said she, “and I know how he come to do it!”

“Tell me!” I asked.

Tish brushed a tear from her cheek an’ replied with the same feeble little smile I see she was forcin’ on herself, and answered:

“We was so taken up with one another that evenin’,” she said, “that we didn’t notice Reub when we passed him on the road, and we didn’t feel the jar when he jumped an’ seated himself lightly in the buggy box behind us; and so he sat there an’ heard every word we said to each other. He thought it a good joke to let on to each of us that he knew what we said, though he never told another livin’ soul. He never thought it would make the trouble between us that it did, and when he found out how angry we both

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was he felt ashamed to own up, so he let it drift on. But he told me about it for the first time last year when I run across him here in the city."

I didn't speak for a minute or so. Then I said, slowly :

"It was a bad business for me an' you, Tish."

"It might have been worse, George," she said, "for we both fell on our feet in the marriage line, I guess."

"I've got a good wife, Tish," I said. "But we can't entirely forget the old days."

"We must, George," she said, risin' to her feet. "I just wanted you to know that I wasn't the mean girl you thought me all these years. So good-bye."

That's the romance of me an' Tish. Ain't it a caution what little things turn the courses of our lives!

But to get back to my story when me an' Tish was young an' foolish, and thinkin' nothin' at all of the future: Tish

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planned to have her cousin Mary Jane over to her place a good deal, and it made it very nice for me an' Ed to meet the girls there. I haven't mentioned that Tish had two sisters older than herself, have I? Well, she had,—Martha an' Minerva was their names—and they both had beaux. So you see, when we got together at Tish's of a Sunday evenin' we made quite a party.

The girls had a certain rule about entertainin' their beaux. It was like this: Martha bein' the oldest, had the parlor, Minerva the sittin' room an' Tish the kitchen. This, of course, when all the fellers was on hand.

When Mary Jane was visitin' an' Ed came, there was no place for them, so they had to manoeuvre the best they knew how, and Ed was no slouch at this, as you'll presently see.

Well, one nice Sunday afternoon me an' Ed, both with a rig of our own, drove up to Tish's an' found Martha's feller,

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Joe Perry, and Tom Clark, Minerva's beau, already on the ground. But to Ed's sorrow there was no Mary Jane, although she'd promised to be on hand. Neither Tish or her sisters knew why Mary Jane hadn't come over, so it was decided that everybody would hitch up an' we'd all swoop down on Ebenezer as a surprise.

This we did, and contrary to expectation the dragon was in a very amiable mood, and insisted on us all stayin' for supper. He see we was all double but Ed, and he turned to him with a sly wink.

"It seems to me, Ed," he says, "as if the other boys was gettin' ahead of you. You don't seem to have a girl."

"That's the way it looks, Mr. Brown," says Ed with a sober face. "The girls don't cotton to me much, so I just come along with George to keep him straight."

The old man chuckled. "Cheer up," he says. "You may get one some day."

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"I hope so," says Ed, and he give Tom Clark a wink that nearly sent that chap into the haymow with convulsions.

"You don't know a girl about these parts, Mr. Brown," Ed says, "who might be had for the askin'?"

Ebenezer scratched his head. "I can't think of one just now," he says. "But I'll keep my eyes open for you," he says.

"Do," says Ed, "and I'll be much obliged. In the meantime I'll just amuse myself watchin' these fellers," he says, "and seein' how they get on."

The old man was now in excellent temper, and nothin' would do but we must go out an' see his bees. This we did, walkin' in Injun file behind him to the row of hives. As he passed each hive he'd stop an' look at it attentively.

"Pretty near ripe," he'd say, "pretty near ripe. Will be ready to pick soon now."

But when he come to the second hive from the end he went gingerly behind it

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an' looked through the glass in the little box, or cap, which set on top of the hive.

"Fine!" he says. "Fine! Ready to pick to-morrow," he says. "Every drop clover—pure clover—every drop. Not a speck of buckwheat in that cap."

Bees didn't interest me particularly, so I was glad when we turned towards the house. The girls had taken off their things an' was waitin' for us, Mary Jane buzzin' about among 'em an' pretendin' not to notice Ed or the rest of us.

Ebenezer stuck right to us. I never see him so sociable, and wouldn't have believed he could be so jolly. It seemed to tickle him that Ed had drove up without a girl, and he says to Mary Jane:

"You must be nice to Ed, Mary Jane," he says, "for you see he ain't got any girl."

Mary Jane hung down her head an' her father laughed.

"Bashful," says he. "Bashful as all git out. Why, Mary Jane," he says, "Ed

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won't bite you—will you, Ed?" says he.

"I don't know 'bout that!" says Ed, and he looked the meanin' of his words.

But Ebenezer kept on:

"Ed wants me to find him a girl," he says, "and I've promised to do it. You don't know of any one, do you?"

"There's Sarah Ann Stevens," says Mary Jane with a lightnin' twinkle of her eye at Ed.

The old man roared.

"Just the one!" he cried; "just the one! I'll look after it for you," he says to Ed. "Me an' Mary Jane'll fix you out all right."

An' so it run on, makin' lots of fun for us all, for we knew that if Ebenezer thought for a minute Ed had a notion of puttin' up to Mary Jane he'd have ordered him from the house.

We set around awhile after supper an' then, two by two, we started to leave. I missed Ed while I was hitchin' up, but s'posed he was havin' a private word with

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Mary Jane in her father's absence. I found him standin' near my buggy when I come from the house with Tish. Then we drove away. Ed followed in a few minutes, an' when we got to Tish's he was right behind us.

"It seems to me, George, as if you must have driven over Uncle Ebenezer's beehives," he called, as we went through the gate.

"That's as true as I live!" Tish cried. "I've smelled honey all the way home!"

Martha an' Joe an' Minerva an' Tom both swore they smelt honey, too, so nothin' would do but we must get a lantern and examine my buggy.

Settin' there in the back, what did we find but a fine cap of honey!

Of course everybody was surprised, but no one could account for the honey till Ed owned up that while we was hitchin' up he'd lifted Ebenezer's pet cap of clover honey that was already to pick to-morrow!

The girls saw there was nothin' to do

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but make the best of the joke, so they sneaked the honey into the house an' hid it for a couple of weeks. After that time they felt it safe to bring it forth from hidin', and it was represented as bein' a present from my father to Mrs. Brown in return for her kindness to me an' Ed.

You can imagine how wild Ebenezer was when he missed his honey, but he never suspected us for a moment, layin' the theft to some wretch or wretches unknown. Mary Jane told us afterwards that he really mourned for that cap of honey as for one dead an' refused to be comforted.

But it seemed we couldn't use that honey up. It hung on an' on until I'd 'bout forgotten it, until well in the fall, when it burst in on us in the followin' way :

It was Sunday, as usual. Everything happened on a Sunday in them days. Ebenezer an' Mrs. Brown, with Mary Jane, had been invited to take dinner with

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Tish's parents, it bein' Tish's father's birthday. Me an' Ed an' Joe Perry an' Tom Clark was on hand as usual, and the big dinin'-room table had a crowd about it when we all sat down.

After the blessin's, the talk went along finely, and Ebenezer was particularly happy in his remarks an' continued to quiz Ed about his lack of a girl, though if he'd had half an eye he could have seen that Mary Jane an' Ed was dartin' love at each other across the table.

Presently Tish's mother jumps up all of a sudden an' crys:—

“Why! To think that here's Ebenezer with us an' we haven't got a drop of honey on the table! Minerva,” she says, “go right down cellar an' bring up a plate of that delicious clover honey George's father sent to me.”

Minerva went, tottering, and I felt rather than heard a sigh go the rounds of the table. We was certainly in for it now, for Ebenezer, with his remarkable taste,

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would instantly spot that honey as his own!

If I could have crawled under the table an' got out I should certainly have gone, but there was no escape, and Minerva appeared with a generous plate of the honey and, obedient to her mother's command, set it directly before her Uncle Ebenezer.

The old man perked his head with delight. He was at his proudest moment—about to pass judgment on the product of a rival bee-keeper, and a no less distinguished one than my father.

He dipped his knife into the honey an' twisted a load on its point with practiced skill, while we shivered an' held our breath.

Then he sniffed the honey. He sniffed again, and we noticed a pained expression come into his face. Then he delicately tasted the honey, runnin' his tongue slowly between his lips.

I knew I was growin' deadly pale from

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suppressed emotion. You could have heard a pin drop until Mrs. Brown broke the weird silence.

“Well, Ebenezer,” she said, “how do you like it?”

“George,” said the old man, solemnly, turnin’ to me, “I’m s’prised at your father—such a careful man as he is, too—sendin’ out such stuff as this under the name of clover honey!” Then he added, with a horrified look in his eyes: “There’s positively buckwheat in it!”

The shock was too great. I give one look at Tish an’ Ed. They was grittin’ their teeth to hold in. The absurdity of the thing was too much. I snorted, and that touched off the rest of the young people an’ the table shook with laughter.

Ebenezer looked pained. Then he looked at the honey. Then a smile crept into the corners of his mouth. He tasted the honey carefully.

“It’s my stolen cap!” he said.

“But, sir,” said I, with the tears run-

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nin' from my eyes, "there's positively buckwheat in it!"

"George," said he, "we'll let it drop where it is. But if you want to keep out of jail, don't tell your father what I said, that's all."

When Me an' Ed Got Religion

'Long about the time me an' Ed was just gettin' on friendly relations with our 'teens, a young Methodist preacher just out from England got stationed on the Milton circuit an' took the notion of holdin' protracted meetin' in the little red schoolhouse. These revival services was a big event in the neighborhood in them days an' be yet, I've no doubt. You know, we never had much of public amusement or excitement, and a winter without a protracted meetin' was considered dull. The young folks 'specially enjoyed such a meetin', 'cause it was a place to go to of a night, and what with the queer things that happened an' the funny experiences told by the converted,

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it stood us in place of a theatre. Father was a natural leader at such times, and as he kept the schoolhouse key, me an' Ed would be sent up early of a night to build the fire an' light the lamps. We used to sock the wood to that old box stove till the top got red hot an' the pipe roared. Then we'd set around an' wait for the folks to come.

Old Henry Simmonds was always the first to arrive.

"Wall, boys," he'd say to me an' Ed, "I see you got a good fire goin'. But that ain't nothin' to the fire as'll roast poor sinners if they don't obey the call an' come for'ard. Git religion, boys," he'd say. "Git religion early in life an' be an honor to your father an' mother." Then he'd sit down in front of the stove an' spit terbacker juice though the damper.

Father never said nothin' to us 'bout gettin' religion, 'cause he thought us too young, but me an' Ed 'ud get mighty serious now an' then, as we was terrible

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'fraid of dyin' an' goin' to the bad place an' welterin' in the fires there. It was good an' real to us then, I tell you; for beside what old Henry Simmonds was eternally dingin' into our ears an' what "Long John" Clark, a local preacher with a powerful, pleadin' voice and an earnest way with him, was always preachin' 'bout fire an' brimstone, we'd the old family Bible at home, with its scarey pictures, to keep us shiverin' most of the time.

There was one picture in that Bible I'll never forget. It was 'long in Revelations an' was intended to show how an Angel come to lock up Satan every thousand years. There was Hell itself a rollin' an' tossin' in flames, the smoke curlin' up in great clouds 'round about. Then there was the Devil in the shape of a horrible dragon with claw feet an' savage, sharp teeth, an' a skin on him like a rhinoceros, crouchin' back, while a tall Angel in bare feet an' long hair confronted him with a

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ponderous iron key. Blame if it didn't just about set our teeth to chatterin' every time we looked at that picture!

But it didn't take me an' Ed long to forget all about the Devil an' the bad place the minute we got out into the open air, with the sun shinin' overhead an' with some mischief or other in our minds. I guess we was too full of life to take things seriously.

Well, this winter, long comes the young English preacher to hold protracted meetin', and he was the most earnest young feller you ever see. He had the "penitentiary" bench full of "convicts" the first week, as old Dan, the French tailor, used to say.

I never told you about Dan, did I? Well, I will some time. He was a case for twistin' words.

Me an' Ed an' a few more boys set back by the stove an' made no move, but we could feel that the spirit or somethin' was workin' in us. We knew we was awful

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sinners, but we hadn't the nerve to go forward. Will Tinker went forward, after a bit, and I remember well how I wished I was him. I could catch a glimpse of him a blubberin' away an' gettin' saved at one end of the penitent bench, and when the prayin' was over an' the tellin' of experiences begun, me an' Ed 'ud whisper back an' forth, after sizin' up the faces, and guess who'd got religion that night. Some would come up tearful an' look as if all their friends an' neighbors was dead an' buried; while others would be calm-faced an' waitin' eagerly to be called on to tell what the Lord had done for them.

One night, after me an' Ed had gone to bed an' I was just beginnin' to doze off, Ed scratched my leg with his big toe—a signal he had for openin' conversation.

"George," says he to me, "I'm goin' for'ard to-morrow night."

"You dasn't do it," says I.

"Yes, I dast," says he. "I'm goin' for'ard an' git religion."

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Ed was such a positive feller that it kinder stumped me for a minute, but I dasn't let him see he'd had the courage to say what I dasn't.

"You go to sleep!" says I. "You're a fool!"

"Well, I'm goin' for'ard just the same," says he.

"You dasn't go for'ard without me," says I.

"I dare, too," says he. "I'll kneel 'longside of Will Tinker."

I lay an' thought, and was mighty uncomfortable. I knew if Ed went forward an' left me by the stove I'd be looked on as an outcast sinner, and Ed 'ud crow over me like sixty if he got religion an' I didn't.

But matters changed in my favor the next night. When the call to come forward came from the young preacher, Ed was pale as a sheet, and didn't stir.

"I thought you was goin' for'ard?" says I in a whisper.

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He chewed a sliver, but didn't say a word.

"Ain't you goin' to git religion?" says I, nudgin' him, for I see he was scart.

"George," says he faintly, "you go first; I'll foller."

That was what I wanted, and when the next call come I marched up, with Ed at my heels, givin' Tish Brown a wink out of my left eye as I passed her.

We knelt 'side of Will Tinker, who was still seekin'; and, diggin' our knuckles into our eyes, waited for religion to come.

"Felt anything yet?" says I to Will, nudgin' him.

"Not a blame thing!" says he, "and my knees is 'bout wore out!"

I could hear Ed mumblin' away, and so I started in to say my prayers, but it didn't seem natural, it not bein' bed-time.

By an' by 'long come old Henry Simmonds, who patted our heads.

"Good boys," says he in his croaky voice. "Save the lambs, Lord!" says he,

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and as he said it he stumbled over the end of a bench.

Will Tinker snickered right out, and I hid my face in my hands to keep from laughin'. Say! I never wanted to laugh so bad in all my life. Me an' Will 'ud look at one 'nother sideways an' then giggle to ourselves, but Ed kept as serious as a judge.

We didn't git religion that night or the next. Will Tinker give up in despair an' left off goin' for'ard, but me an' Ed hung it out.

Finally, one night in bed I felt Ed's big toe scrapin' along my calf an' I knew somethin' was comin'.

"George," says he, "I b'lieve I've got it!"

"Got what?" says I.

"Religion," says he.

"When did you get it?" says I.

"Well, I've been figurin'," says he, "and I guess I've got it."

I argued pro an' con, but couldn't

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shake him. I was in a pickle. I knew positive that I hadn't been moved a peg, but I dasn't let Ed get ahead of me.

Next night, while we was buildin' the fire, I says to him:—

“Ed,” says I, “if you've got it, I've got it, too.”

“Are you sure?” says he.

“Well, to tell the truth, Ed,” says I, “I ain't dead certain.”

“I guess you've got it, George,” says he, “for you've looked solemn all day.”

We stood up that night among the saved, and father talked very nice to us an' mother cried a heap.

The next day we started out to live a pious life, and carried our Sunday-school lesson in our pockets. We prayed for everybody we knew an' felt quite lifted up for nigh a week, and then the crash came.

It was this way: Up in the gables of our barn was four little star-shaped holes for the pigeons to come in an' out, and

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just below them holes a pair of martins had built their mud nest, and me an' Ed had been figurin' for some time how to get up there an' investigate the martin family. We could climb up just so far an' then have to give up.

Well, this day we started in to make a sure thing of them martins. We took off our boots, and diggin' our toes into the clapboards an' hangin' to the joist, began to climb. Up we went, higher'n ever, and I got so I could just reach the bottom of the martin's nest, when I heard a yell from Ed an' see him tumble backward to the mow below. He struck kerflop in the soft pea straw, and at once began to holler. I crawled back as fast as I could, thinkin' he'd hurt himself. When I reached the mow I found him sittin' on a beam with one foot in his hand, the toes all twisted up an' him a cryin' to beat the band.

"Dum them thistles!" he says, sobbin'.
"Gosh dum them blame thistles!"

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He'd dropped fair into a bunch of straw full of thistles—dry, old, sharp, brown fellers—that run in like needles, and his feet was full of 'em.

"Do they hurt you, Ed?" says I, feelin' bad for him.

He let out a yell, and I see he was crazy mad.

"Gosh dum them thistles!" was all he could say. "Gosh dum them gosh dum thistles!"

When he'd quieted down some I started in to help him pick the thistles from his feet an' clothes, and I says to him:—

"Ed," says I, "I thought you had religion?"

"Dum them thistles!—blame 'em!" says he. "Gosh dum 'em!!"

"Ed," says I, "stop cussin'. You got religion."

"I ain't got no religion! Dum religion!" he howls.

"You're a backslider," says I, nippin' a long, ugly thistle from the calf of his leg.

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"Dum religion!" says he, sobbin'.
"Dum the martins, too!" says he, glancin' up at them. "Gosh dum 'em!"

"Ed," says I, "you'll go to the bad place, sure."

"I don't give a dum!" says he.

"I'll go to Heaven," says I, "and you'll go to the bad place."

"Go where you like," says he. "There ain't no thistles in the bad place, anyhow," says he, defiant as you please.

He kept dummin' away savage as could be till he'd found the last thistle. Then we went to play over by the pig-pen.

That night Ed's big toe told me he'd somethin' to say, and I waited.

"George," says he, "I wish you'd give it up."

"Give up what?" says I.

"Religion," says he. "I ain't got it an' I don't want to go to the bad place alone."

In my heart I was glad to be let off from prayin' an' bein' solemn, but I made the most of it.

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"Give me the green alley with the white rings," says I, "and I'll do it."

"I'll give you four brown marbles," says he.

"The green alley," says I, "or I stick."

"I'll give you five," says he.

"Nothin' but the green alley," says I, for I knew I had him.

He thought for some time an' finally wavered.

"Say 'dum religion,' same's I did," says he, "and I'll give you the green alley."

I had to say it, and then we both went to sleep. We was hardened sinners from that time on, until Ed growed up an' got to be a preacher himself.

One day I says to him, sittin' smokin' in his study, when he was preparin' a sermon: "Ed," says I, "do you remember that time we went up after martins an' lost religion?"

Ed grinned. "You don't ever forget anything, George," says he. "What boys we was!"

The Persuasive Eloquence of John Wesley Cuff

You've all read in books an' newspapers about certain men bein' such orators that they could move their audiences to laughter or tears by the magic of their voice. I heard once that Bob Ingersoll was such a man, and I went to hear him, but he didn't move me any. He's a good talker, is Bob, but do you know, that instead of movin' me along with him he kinder grated on my sensibilities, for I was farmer born an' bred, and it rasped me up an' down the back the way he pitched into all that I'd been taught to hold sacred.

I heard Phillips Brooks once, too, but he was no orator. Prob'ly the best speaker I ever heard was old Sir John MacDonald. I never agreed with Sir

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John in politics, but I must own he could tell his side of the story in a way to convince anybody not born a Grit.

The speakers that we read about don't 'mount to so much when we actually hear 'em, and I must confess I never met but one man who could simply toy with the human emotions, and that man was a chap by the name of John Wesley Cuff, or, as he was more commonly called, Wess Cuff.

Wess wasn't a particularly strikin' individual, but he wasn't bad lookin' an' had a good figure. He was a driver for a livery stable; not a high position, but one which he made the most of. He'd a low, soft, sweet voice for a man, with tones in it like the purr of a cat. With this voice always went a magical smile. I say magical, for it was really magical. He could smile with either his eyes, his mouth, his forehead or his cheeks, without disturbin' the other parts, or he could unite 'em all in one marvellous smirk that 'ud enchant an' captivate the unwary.

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Jimmy O'Shay, the old deer hunter, introduced me to John Wesley Cuff. Jimmy had hired Wess to go back with him to Whistlin' Coon Lake, a distance of fifty miles from the borders of civilization, after a load of deer which he'd shot several weeks before an' left hangin' in the woods out of reach of bears an' wolves.

Jimmy O'Shay was a character, too, but this story isn't about him. I'll only say that Jimmy had a particularly soft heart that went well with his snow-white hair; that he loved bravery an' despised meanness, and that he was the most famous swearer between Toronto an' Montreal. Oaths fairly rippled from the lips of Jimmy O'Shay, and it could truthfully be said that he exuded profanity; but the strange part of it was that you seldom noticed that he was swearin', he did it so natural like.

I'd never been back in the real wilderness, so when Jimmy invited me to

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accompany him on his trip, I accepted with spirit, for I wanted to see the back country. I saw it, and I don't want to see it again. Once is enough for me.

Well, we got started all right, with a fine team of gray horses an' a big bob-sleigh with the bottom full of straw to keep our feet warm. Between Jimmy an' Wess they kept the conversation lively. They couldn't agree on a single point, and refused to be convinced when I decided a point one way or t'other. They knowed everybody who'd ever lived for miles an' miles around, and each had a positive opinion to express.

Jimmy 'ud say to Wess:—

“Wess,” he'd say, “what's the good o' you talkin' to me, when I know that every word rollin' out yer throat's a lie!”

And Wess 'ud return:—

“Jimmy,” he'd say, “there ain't a man far an' near as I respect more'n I do you. You've been like a father to me, Jimmy, but I must say that, for a man of your

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age, you've the most distorted notion of facts of any man alive. I don't say you lie, Jimmy—remember that. I honor age; but I do say that you don't know what you're talkin' about half the time."

Then Jimmy 'ud breathe profanity on the frosty air an' start all over again.

We passed the jumpin'-off place at noon of the second day, and then had to pick a road as best we could along a blazed trail, which wasn't difficult as long as the light held out. It was the intention of my companions to reach the home of the Bheels, a family of backwoods farmers, before dark, but the night fairly dropped on us before we was within five miles of the Bheels' clearin', and we had to pick our way cautious like 'long among the stumps an' trees.

We was half frozen when we caught the first glimmer of light ahead, and sure enough, it turned out to be the cabin of the Bheels.

Wess drove up before the door with a

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flourish. A couple of half-starved curs come yelpin' round the corner of the house, and Wess lifted up his voice in a cheery "Hallo!"

The cabin door opened an' I saw a stout woman in the entry, with half a dozen eager faces peerin' over her shoulders.

"The 'Queen of the Woods' an' her fairies, by all the gods!" cried Wess, standin' up in the sleigh an' bowin' profoundly.

"It's that there Wess Cuff," I heard the "Queen" say, as she turned to her attendant fairies, and then she called:—

"Is that you, Wess, sure enough?"

"It's me, mother,—just poor little me an' Jimmy an' a young feller out for his health. Can you put us up?"

We didn't wait for a reply, but bundled out into the snow, and gatherin' up an armful of blankets an' provender each, we entered the house.

It was a log house, one story an' a six-

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teenth high. The parlor, dinin'-room, spare bedroom, library, kitchen an' wood-house was all on the first floor. There was no partitions between these rooms. The family bedrooms was in bunks along the south wall of the cabin, and the room for guests an' dogs was on the floor behind the cook-stove,—that is, if the guests didn't choose to crawl up a ladder into the loft an' run the risk of losin' their lives in collision with bundles of seed corn on the ear, suspended from the rafters. There was a bare table in the combination room, several rough wooden chairs, a cupboard with a few dishes, and the rest of the furnishin's was human or animal.

First, there was father Bheel, a weak-eyed man, slender an' stooped, who might be any age you could guess. He chewed terbacker earnestly an' spit into the damper from any point in the room with a directness that would have made his fortune on the variety stage. He was a man given to silence.

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Second, there was mother Bheel—a large woman, rugged an' mighty in her massiveness of strength. She pervaded the cabin with form an' voice. She was certainly a woman that made her presence felt. I'd not call her face handsome; it was far from that. It wasn't a motherly face either, but for all it was a strong and genuinely feminine face. She was a tireless talker, but her voice run to harshness, caused likely by the high pitch at which she kept it.

Third, there was Bobby Bheel—a young man, p'raps twenty-one, with a natural growth of whiskers an' brains. He likewise was an expert marksman, although I've see him miss,—somethin' his father never did.

Fourth, there was the girls—Minnie, Ellen an' Mamie—twenty, eighteen, sixteen,—blonde, with faded brown hair; blonde, with very much faded brown hair; blonde, with bright red hair. Passable—homely—pretty. All wore short dresses

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an' was bare-footed. All had outgrown their dresses, as could be seen from the free play given their wrists an' hands, and all preferred safety pins to buttons, as was likewise exteriorly manifested. All was bashful—all was curious, and all thought John Wesley Cuff was the most delightful man in the world.

Fifth, there was the dogs—Jerry an' Stingo—friends an' lovers; passionately fond of one another's ears; sharp-eyed hound pups, with sweet dispositions an' very accommodatin' when requested to give place by the stove to another member of the family.

After supper—I won't describe that supper. It was what reporters call "unfit for publication." After supper Jimmy an' I decided that the air of the general room wasn't good for us, and that we'd crawl up into the attic an' go to sleep. This we did, but we didn't go to sleep, for every word said below could plainly be heard by us.

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The family, with Wess seated between Minnie an' Mamie on a bench, immediately at the rear of the stove, evidently had no intention of retirin' before dawn. The conversation was all interestin', but I only want to tell you that part which shows up the wonderful persuasiveness of John Wesley Cuff.

"Bobby," says Wess, in his softest, sweetest tone,— "Bobby," says he, "when I come in to-night I was a little surprised at you, Bobby. When your father told you to run an' put up the horses, you didn't jump at the word, Bobby," says he, "the way a smart, active boy like you should. You hung 'round the fire, Bobby, and let your poor old father go first—now, didn't you?"

"Naw, I didn't," says Bobby in a muffled tone.

"Yes, you did, drat you!" yells the old man. "Don't answer me back! You—shut up, there, or I'll swat you!"

Silence for a moment, and then Wess's

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gentle voice:—"Bobby, how would you like to see your dear old father laid out in his coffin,—arms folded, eyes shut, with coppers on 'em, and the hearse standin' outside the door to bear his body away to the grave! Wouldn't you think then of your dear old father, Bobby?—of how he raised you from a boy, and worked an' sweat for you to give you a livin' and an education? Wouldn't it just break your heart, Bobby, to recall the many times you've let your father do the chores which you could have done as well an' saved his dear old back? Ah, yes!—you'll think of that, Bobby, when your dear old father's gray hairs are laid away an' his back's straightened out in death!"

The audible grief of the family could now be distinctly heard, and comin' from between sobs which shook Mrs. Bheel's powerful, maternal bosom, was these words:—

"Say you will, Bobby!"—a big sob—
"say you will, Bobby!"

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"I don't want to see'm dead, and I never said I did," says Bobby, defiantly.

"Oh, Bobby! you're horrid!" snaps Minnie.

"I ain't, neither!" says Bobby.

"Shet up there, you! Don't you sass your sister!" cries his father. "A bad, undutiful son you are, and you know it."

"I ain't, neither!" says Bobby.

"Shet up!—shet up!—or I'll swat you!" again scolds the old man.

Then Wess glides into the discord with: "Bobby, you're a good boy. I ain't down on you, Bobby. I always told your dear mother you was a bright boy. 'Mrs. Bheel,' I says to her many's an' many's a time, 'Bobby'll be a handsome man, Mrs. Bheel, and look just like you, Mrs. Bheel.' Now, didn't I say them words, mother?"

"That you did, Mr. Cuff," replied the flattered mother, with pride in her voice. "You said them very words, Mr. Cuff, and Bobby's a handsome boy, though

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who he took it from, the Lord knows! for it was certainly not his father, and as for me——”

“Mrs. Bheel!—mother!” says Wess. “Go slow, now; not so fast there. You ain’t blarneyin’ with Jimmy now, but talkin’ with John Wesley Cuff, who never says a word he don’t mean an’ can’t prove. I know where Bobby gets his good looks, and where Minnie an’ Mamie an’ Ellen here get their beauty,—oh, I know!”

Wess must have squeezed the girls at this point, for they gave a little scream an’ Mrs. Bheel said:

“Girls! girls!—don’t be shy. It’s only Mr. Cuff.”

Wess continued, and I could imagine how blandly he smiled:—

“Yes, Bobby is a handsome boy an’ his whiskers are very becomin’,” he says. “Now, Bobby, I want you to think. You’re a good boy at heart, Bobby, and I know you love your father an’ mother an’ your three pretty sisters, and you

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wouldn't want to go away an' leave 'em. So, Bobby, when you see your father move to'ards the barn, you must jump in ahead of him an' have the chores all done before he passes the woodpile. It's in you to do it, Bobby,—now ain't it?"

"I like to be good," says Bobby, quite plaintive.

"Yes, he does," says his father. "Bobby is a 'tarnal good boy. Why, only last ploughin' I says to John Chinneck, as I handed him a chaw of terbacker—'John,' says I, 'if you only had a boy like my Bobby, 'twould be easier for you,' and John 'lowed it would."

"Now, that's what I always thought," says Wess. "So here we are, all happy an' lovin' an' admirin' of one 'nother."

Then says he: "Mamie," he says, "do you go to school now?"

"Not in winter time, Mr. Cuff," says Mamie.

"Can you read an' write?" says he.

"Can Mamie read an' write!" cries

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Mrs. Bheel. "You jest show him what you can do, Mamie. Why, she's the scholar of the family!"

"Now, mother, go slow—go slow," says Wess. "Remember, you ain't talkin' to Jimmy O'Shay now," says he. "Don't I know these girls, one an' all? Haven't I known 'em for years? Don't you go to disparagin' your oldest daughters, Mrs. Bheel, just because they ain't attendin' ladies' colleges or havin' the priv'lege of three months' schoolin' each summer, the same's Mamie."

"I ain't disparagin' 'em," says Mrs. Bheel.

"Well, it sounds very much like it, when you go an' set up your youngest child as the scholar of the family right over the heads of her beautiful sisters."

Minnie an' Ellen was now in tears. I could plainly hear 'em sobbin' and Mrs. Bheel evidently felt very uncomfortable.

"It's a terrible thing, Mrs. Bheel," continues Wess, "to flaunt one child over

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another. It breeds discord an' envy. Don't cry, Minnie. Cheer up, Ellen; don't take it so to heart. Even if your mother does go back on you an' put up Mamie as the only child she loves, I'll stand by you, and so will your father an' Bobby. You'll be all right yet when you go out front an' marry a handsome, rich man apiece, and then won't your mother miss you!"

"I never said I didn't love them girls!" sobs Mrs. Bheel.

"Well, well," says Wess, "we won't argue it any further. I'm waitin' for Mamie to read for me."

"I won't read for you!" says Mamie, with a pout.

"Mamie," says Wess, "you'll fall off the bench if you move any further away, and Ellen will slip in between you an' me. Come here to my side. Now, Mamie, look me in the eyes. You're angry at me, Mamie, 'cause I stuck up for your sisters. Did I say, Mamie, that you wasn't

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the cutest little girl back of Cloyne? Did I say that you wasn't so blame handsome, with them black eyes an' red lips of yours, that if you'd dare to step your foot out front the fellers wouldn't make a dead set for you?—now, did I, Mamie?"

"No, you didn't," says Mamie, mild as a kitten.

"Then read to me," says Wess.

She read, or stumbled over a lesson from the Second Reader about "Silverlocks an' the Bears," and when she'd done, Wess clapped his hands.

"A kiss for reward!" he cried, and I heard the smack plainly.

Everything was quiet now for a few minutes, and no sound broke the stillness save the sizzlin' in the fire when father Bheel struck the bulls'-eye.

Then Wess began again at Bobby:

"Bobby," he says, "is it actually true that you'll set here by the stove burnin' the soles off your boots, while your dear, kind mother carries in the wood? You

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may think, Bobby, that I don't notice, but I do."

"She never asks me," says Bobby, with a growl.

"He wouldn't do it if I did ask him," returns his mother.

"He makes us carry all the water, too," says the girls in chorus.

"It ain't no sech thing," says Bobby, fidgetin'.

"Shet up, or I'll swat your face!" cries Mr. Bheel, wakin' up. "Shet up, you unnatural son, you!"

"Ah, me!" says Wess, "that's the way with boys. Here's Bobby, a great, strap-pin' feller capable of doin' two men's work, and yet he sits by the fire and lets his father do the chores, his delicate mother carry in the wood an' his sweet sisters bend their frail backs luggin' water. You'd ought to be ashamed, Bobby—that's what you had. You'd ought to feel too mean to hold up your head."

"He's a lazy, good-for-nothin'," says

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Mrs. Bheel. "All he can do is shovel in sauerkraut an' salt pork. He's an ungrateful boy, and I always said it."

"Now, you know I ain't, mother," says Bobby, chokin' up.

"Yes, you be!" yells the old man,—
"yes, you be, you lazy lummicks! Don't open your mouth to me, sir, or I'll swat your face!"

"I don't see why you're all down on me!" sobs Bobby.

"'Cause you're a bad, ungrateful boy," says his mother.

A few minutes of painful silence now ensued; then I heard the voice of John Wesley Cuff, and by its tone I felt he was goin' to calm the storm.

"Bobby," says he, "there ain't no doubt that you've let your mother carry in wood, but I don't believe you'll ever do it again. You musn't let her do it, Bobby. It makes her bend her back, Bobby, and if she keeps it up, it'll spoil her figure, which mustn't be; for, Bobby,

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do you ever realize what a handsome, young-lookin' mother you have, and that she's generally considered the finest-built woman back of Cloyne?

"Think how you'd miss her, Bobby, were she to break her back one day over a pine knot! Who'd sew earlappers into your cap then? Who'd darn your mittens then, Bobby, and knit new feet into your socks? Who'd make the sauerkraut an' dried apple pie, which you love so well, if your mother was turned into an angel an' flew away?

"Look at her now, Bobby, sittin' by your side, and then think of your loss!"

"You praise me too high, Mr. Cuff—you certainly do," says Mrs. Bheel, but I knew that her heart was glad in her.

"You're so modest," says Wess. "Girls," says he, "just look at your mother; see her blush. Ain't she handsome now? Girls, listen to me: Try to avoid bein' as over modest an' humble as your mother is. If you don't, you'll not get far in the

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world." Then he took Bobby up where he'd temporarily abandoned him.

Bobby," says he, "I believe you have a genuinely good heart, and no matter what anyone says they can't make me believe to the contrary. You will now stop to think, and when you see your mother make a motion for wood, you just jump, Bobby, and have an armful beside the stove in a jiffy. And the same with your delicate sisters, who are just blossomin' out like young cherry trees—grab the water pail from their hands an' fly to the pump.

"It would have been the makin' of me, Bobby, if I'd been brought up with three such lovely girls as these. I wouldn't have been half as selfish as I am. So promise me, Bobby, that you won't do it again."

"I'll promise anything," says Bobby.

"You hear that, Mrs. Bheel?" says Wess. "Bobby promises to be good. Now I want you to forgive him."

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"I do forgive him," says Mrs. Bheel. "Bobby's a mighty good boy, and I do love him."

"Do you forgive your only brother, girls?" says Wess.

"We ain't got nothin' agin him," they said in one voice.

"Now, you see, Bobby," says Wess, "I've fixed you out all right, an' you can start fresh. Always remember I'm your friend, Bobby."

And so it went on. I could hear Jimmy turnin' nervously every now an' then, and swearin' softly to himself. I didn't believe I'd ever get to sleep, for the moment I'd make up my mind that the conversation down stairs was over an' compose myself for slumber, that moment would bring the soft, insinuat' voice of John Wesley Cuff up through the cracks, and I was forced to listen to a new line of argument. Before midnight he had the old man worked up to the point of applyin' for a divorce from his wife. This he

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smoothed down in a few minutes. He had Minnie bitterly jealous of Ellen, and Mamie hatin' every other member of the family who was said to be keepin' this wild rose down.

Bobby was mauled in harrowin' style, and once when his father raised a stick of stove wood to throw at his son, Wess calmed the storm, and in a minute more father an' son was on the best of terms.

I haven't exaggerated a single point. Wess's power was wonderful. The last thing I remember, he had the girls tellin' him just what they'd do if they had a hundred dollars each to spend as they liked.

In the mornin' Wess kissed all the ladies good-bye an' shook hands warmly with Bobby an' his father. Mrs. Bheel told me in strict confidence, while Wess was hitchin' up, that he was her ideal of a man ; that God Almighty may have made smarter men an' pleasanter men to meet than Wess Cuff, but she'd never met 'em.

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Wess gave each of the girls a brightly-polished brass ring, and to Bobby he gave an equally attractive jewsharp.

If they'd been Pagan-bred, the Bheels would have made a god to represent John Wesley Cuff an' worshipped it with heart-felt adoration.

On our return with the deer, we only stopped at the Bheels to warm. Wess improved this opportunity by invitin' the whole family to come an' stay with him any time they happened in town. Neither the girls or Bobby had ever seen the cars, and Mrs. Bheel had only heard them at a distance. So they listened eagerly while Wess dilated on the sights of the town.

When we got under way again, Jimmy O'Shay turned to Wess an' said:—

“Wess Cuff, you're the low downdest, meanest cuss I ever see—leadin' them poor, foolish people on to thinkin' that they really 'mount to somethin' in the world. What good does it do you, man, to lie an' deceive so?”

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“Why, Jimmy, it ain’t lyin’ an’ deceit,” says Wess. “I was jest jollyin’ ’em along, you know. You ain’t got no fun in you, Jimmy—not a blame bit. Why, the other night, when I had ’em all lovin’ one another one minute an’ ready to fight the next, I don’t believe I ever had a better time. It was better’n any show I was ever to.”

About five miles the other side of Cloyne, Wess claimed he was feelin’ faint, and pulled up before a rather respectable, small frame farmhouse, statin’ that he was goin’ to ask for a glass of milk. Both me an’ Jimmy O’Shay felt that a few minutes’ warmin’ wouldn’t do us any harm; so we tied the horses an’ marched to the house in a body.

The farmer was away, but his wife was at home, and she proved mighty hospitable, givin’ us all the milk we wanted an’ apologizin’ for not bein’ able to entertain us better. She was a young, fine-lookin’ woman of about thirty, plump as a part-

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ridge an' very sociable. As we sat by the stove, warmin', Wess as usual kept up a lively conversation with her, and discovered her weakest point to be a passionate love for jewelry.

Now, Wess never went anywhere without his pockets full of cheap chains an' rings, which he was accustomed to work off on the rustics, much to the disgust of that honest Irishman—Jimmy O'Shay.

He produced from his vest pocket a small chamois bag, from which he took a long, glitterin', ladies' watch-chain, and fondled it lovin'ly in his hand.

"Your speakin' of jewelry, ma'am, reminded me of this lovely chain," he says, smilin' at the woman.

She eyed the chain covetously.

"I shouldn't have brought so expensive a chain as this with me," says Wess, seriously. "But I daren't leave it at home for fear of its bein' stolen while I was away."

"Did you buy it for your wife?" says the woman.

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“No, I didn’t,” says Wess. “She has one now,—not so good a chain, of course, but one that fills the bill all right. She wanted this chain an’ begged like a baby for it, but I really couldn’t afford the pleasure of givin’ it to her. I got it fairly cheap, however, from a drummer. Where he got it, I don’t know an’ didn’t inquire. He was hard up,—I guess he’d been playin’ the game an’ had to part with it. Now, how much d’ye think this chain might be worth, ma’am?”

Wess stretched the chain from one hand to the other an’ then dangled it before the woman’s eyes. She made a motion to take it, but he evidently had no intention of grantin’ her the pleasure of fondlin’ it.

“It might have cost ten dollars,” says she.

“Why, lady!” cries Wess in an injured tone. “You don’t really mean that! Look at this beautiful chain again. See how the links are all double locked. I thought you could guess better than that.”

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"Well, I ain't much of a judge of price," says the woman, much abashed, as she saw she'd hurt his feelin's in puttin' the price so low. "We don't see such lovely things back here very often," she says. "I know it's a beautiful chain, and must have cost a lot of money,—may be twenty-five dollars."

"That's better," says Wess, "and if you'd just make a little sum by settin' twenty-five down on the slate, puttin' two under it an' sayin 'twice five is ten—ought an' carry one—twice two is four an' one to carry makes five,' you'd have fifty dollars; and that's about what the chain cost originally, though I will own I didn't pay quite that for it."

I heard Jimmy swearin' softly into the damper. Jimmy was a terrible polite man before women.

"Why, I never had as much as fifty dollars in my life," says the woman.

"It's a big sum," says Wess, and he started to put away the chain.

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"Won't you let me hold it in my hands?" says the woman.

Wess looked at her an' then enveloped her in his wonderful smile, all the features joinin' in.

"Just like a child," he says. "I always did say women is jest like children. Can't see a thing but they must have their hands on it." Then he lightly tossed the chain about the woman's neck.

She blushed red an' dangled the part that hung down.

"Oh, it's so lovely!" says she.

Wess gazed at her, then at the chain, smilin' all the while, and presently the question came that he waited for.

"What's the very least you'd take for it?" says she.

"I'm afraid it's too expensive for you," says he.

"I might afford it," says she, "and John would buy it, I know, if he was here. John gets me everything I want."

"Have you got forty dollars?" says

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Wess,—(you must remember the chain was worth probably seventy-five cents.)

“No, I haven’t any money,” says she, “but I’ve got a cow.”

“Well, we’ll start with the cow,” says Wess. “Put the cow down for twenty dollars,” says he. “It’s a big price, but seein’ you want the chain so badly I’m inclined to be liberal.”

“Then I’ve got a dozen geese,” says she, smilin’ silly like.

“Twelve geese at seventy-five cents each,—say a dollar,” says he. “That makes twelve dollars. Twenty an’ twelve is thirty-two. Come again,” says he.

“I ain’t got nothin’ more but a shoat,” says she, “and John wouldn’t want to part with the shoat.”

“One shoat, five dollars,” says Wess. “Thirty-two an’ five is thirty-seven. Three dollars shy; but I’m generous. Give me the cow, the twelve geese an’ the shoat, and the chain is yours.”

“Oh, I couldn’t part with the shoat,”

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says she, very sad. "I couldn't part with the shoat," says she. "It's John's shoat an' he wants to winter it."

"Well, I'm afraid we can't trade, then," says Wess, the smile dyin' out of his face as he reached his hand for the chain.

The woman slowly took the chain from about her neck, as if it was tearin' her heart strings to do so.

"I jest dasn't part with the shoat," says she, still holdin' the chain.

Wess still held out his hand.

"You couldn't think of lettin' me keep the shoat?" says she.

"Not possibly," says Wess.

She dropped the chain reluctantly into his hand.

"John would be mad if I let the shoat go," says she. "I couldn't do it. He'd grieve about it."

We thanked the woman for her hospitality. Jimmy gave her a quarter, and I slipped another quarter into the hand which had so lovin'ly toyed with Wess's

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brass chain. Not a word was spoken until we was a mile or so from the house. Then Jimmy began to melt the icicles clustered on his gray mustache with a torrid stream of red-hot cuss words.

"Wess Cuff," says he, "you've driven me for the last time. You're a dangerous man to be with," says he, "and you an' I part after this trip. You contemptible scoundrel!—tryin' to sell a poor lone woman a cheap brass chain for her only cow, her feather-bed geese and her husband's shoat! You scoundrel!" says he.

Wess only laughed, and chirped to the horses.

"A cow, twelve geese an' a shoat," says Jimmy indignantly. "You villain!"

Wess never said a word; only kept a chucklin' to himself.

There was silence for p'raps five minutes, and then Jimmy began to splutter again. He evidently was worryin' over somethin', because he kept repeatin' the items of the proposition.

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"Tell me, Wess Cuff, you scoundrel!" says he, "what made you stick out for the shoat?"

Wess continued to chuckle, but didn't reply.

"The shoat couldn't have been worth more'n two dollars," says Jimmy. "Why in thunderation did you balk at the shoat?"

"Jimmy," says Wess in splendid good nature,—“Jimmy,” he says, “you’re a fine feller, and you’re a mighty good shot with a rifle; you’re a blame good feller, Jimmy, but you ain’t got as much sense of humor as one of your hound pups. Your brains has all run to seed, Jimmy; you’re growin’ as blind as a bat in your mind an’ you can’t see through a wire fence.”

"Oh, yes!—go on an’ abuse me," says Jimmy, but much more meekly, for he felt that Wess had somethin’ up his sleeve. "Go on an’ abuse me," he says, "but first tell me one thing—why you stuck on

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the shoat?" The repeated question sent Wess into a roar of laughter.

"Oh my trousies!" says he, "but Jimmy's goin' into mental decline! Do somethin' for it, Jimmy," he says, "or I see the asylum before you!"

"Didn't you really mean to trade after all?" says Jimmy, quite humble now, "and was you just stickin' out for the shoat as a bluff?" says he.

Wess winked at me.

"Jimmy's beginnin' to think," says he. "Jimmy's beginnin' to reason."

"But tell me!" says Jimmy, angrily.

"You tell me first," says Wess, "how much you give the woman for entertainin' you?"

"I give her a quarter," says Jimmy, proudly.

"Well, I give her the chain," says Wess, and then he laughed louder'n ever, while Jimmy sunk into his fur coat an' never opened his mouth till we reached home.

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He did. He give her the chain when we wasn't lookin'. I never knew a more remarkable man than John Wesley Cuff.

The Tale of a Strange Bed

The man who hustles for a livin' finds himself in many peculiar situations an' memorable sleepin' places.

I believe I've slept on every kind of bed imaginable, from the bare earth to a hair mattress. I've slept in spare beds an' contracted rheumatism ; in straw beds, which left their mark on me for days ; in feather beds, that gave me the asthma, and in beds so hard that I'd bruise myself every time I'd turn over.

But the wildest night I ever passed was in the bunk of a farmer's cabin, one hot moonlight night in August, when I was on a collectin' trip for the firm.

There was a country store that failed, owin' us a lot of money. In the distribution of assets, a small farm fell to our

A BUNDLE OF YARNS

share, and the old man said to me one day :—

“George,” he said, “I want you to take a run out in the country an’ look up that farm, for I don’t know whether it’s worth the taxes or not.”

I found the neighborhood all right, but I’m hanged if I could find the farm. Nobody seemed to know anything about it, and the section was so thinly settled that there wasn’t many people to ask.

Well, I drove around all day, inquiren’ here an’ there, wherever I found a cabin, but, as I said, without success. Sunset found me far from the nearest village an’ in a mighty poor humor; but I was used to hard luck an’ mean jobs in them days, and was accustomed to make the best of bad bargains.

I’d travelled for fully half an hour without sightin’ a human bein’, so when I come out of a pine grove full on a log shanty, I swear the cabin looked handsome to me.

TALE OF A STRANGE BED

I pulled up before the door an' halloed.
A man stepped to the entrance, wipin'
his face with a towel.

"Hello!" says I.

"Hello!" says he.

"Can you tell me where I am?" says I.

"You're on the Gore road, six miles
from Aiken an' p'inted due east," says he.

"Thank you," says I. "I didn't know
but the bad place was somewhere's here
around, and I'd a notion of puttin' up
there for the night."

"It's hot enough 'most anywhere else
to-night," says he. "But if you ain't too
particular you might come in an' have
supper with us—we was just settin' down
—for they tell me the 'Old Boy' ain't a
particular good provider," and the man
grinned. He'd certain a vein of humor
in him.

"Did you ever hear of the Willoughby
farm?" says I.

"I have," says he.

My spirits rose at once.

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"You're the man I've been lookin' for all day," says I. "They told me there was just one man in the county that knew that the world was round, and I thank God I've found him."

The man still stood in the door, mop-pin' his face an' grinnin'.

"Where is this farm?" says I.

"That's a long story," says he, "for it's what I call a lost farm, and will take a land surveyor to find it, bein' situated on the Gore between the seventh an' eighth concessions."

"Could you point it out?" says I.

"I could show you a part of it," says he.

"Then," says I, jumpin' from the buggy, "you're my man; and if you can put me up for the night, we could look up the farm in the mornin'."

The man helped me unhitch, and we soon had the horse put up. Then we went into the house. It was a log cabin of only one room, and about as primitive

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an affair as you'd find in a year's travel.

The man's wife was inside gettin' supper. I remember the meal was rhubarb sauce an' bread an' butter, chiefly—a mighty poor meal; and I wondered that such a clever-talkin' man would be content with such poverty.

After supper me an' him went outside and seated ourselves on a bench to have a smoke, while the woman washed up the things.

"How in the world," says I to him, "do you come to be back here in this God-forsaken place?"

The man took his pipe from between his teeth an' looked cautiously toward the cabin door. Seein' that his wife was busily engaged, he turned to me an' said:—

"I don't wonder that you ask me, but the reason I'm here is very simple. She an' me is happier here than in any other place in the world."

"What's the story?" says I.

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He looked at me keenly. "You're a total stranger in these parts, be you?" says he.

"Never was here before an' never will be again," says I.

"Then I don't mind tellin' you," says he, "for God knows it does my heart good to talk with a townsman once again."

"You're a city man born, then?" says I.

"Aye," says he. "I was born in the biggest city this side 'o London."

"New York?" says I.

"Yes," says he, "in New York. I was born an' raised in New York. Damn it forever an' ever, amen!"

He said this reverently, raisin' his eyes to the sky, which was sparklin' bright with stars.

"You ain't stuck on the city, I would judge?" says I.

"I don't want to ever see a city again," says he.

He sat for some minutes mediatin', and I see there was a mighty interestin'

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story at the tip of his tongue, but I thought best not to urge him.

“You see that full moon comin’ up over the trees?” he says after a bit,—“rollin’ up, rollin’ up,—big as a house a-fire? She’s careenin’ up just like that out of the sea an’ crawlin’ over the tall buildin’s in New York this very minute. What does she see here? Fields of stumps an’ stones, a big forest, and right here a little log cabin. What kind of people does she see? A man as loves his wife better’n his immortal soul, and a woman who’d go to hell for her husband any day. I ain’t speakin’ of you, of course. She sees us here, earnin’ our livin’ by the hardest kind of hard work, but honest an’ happy.

“What does she see in New York?—the part where I was born an’ bred? Misery an’ woe; vice that you dasn’t mention; human sewage; beer guzzlin’; foul-talkin’ men, women an’ children.

“I was born in a room over a rum-

A BUNDLE OF YARNS

shop. In a city of schools I never had a day's schoolin'. I was taught to steal an' to lie. My father I never knew. My mother give me to a Jew woman an' run away—God knows where. I sold papers; I blacked boots; I stole on sight. I was four times on the Island before I was eighteen.

“She,”—noddin' toward the cabin—“come up with me, side by side. She was also a nameless kid. We fed together as children on doorsteps an' slept together in odds an' ends of corners. She sold papers, too, and scrubbed out saloons at odd times. Whenever I come from the Island she was sure to be on the wharf to meet me; and we loved each other as no two kids ever loved before outside the story books. At least I think so. Well, the last time I come out—I was always sent up for swipin' somethin' or other,—she met me as usual an' says to me:—‘Jimmy,’ she says, ‘we’re goin’ away.’ ‘Where?’ says I. ‘To the place

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where there ain't nobody at all,' says she.
'Come along,' says she.

"An' we went. Due north we went, as ragged a pair of tramps as ever you see. We both spent the winter in jail as vagrants, but in the spring we started again, and kept due north till we crossed the St. Lawrence an' come into Canada. We thought sure there would be nobody in Canada, but there was. So we kept pushin' back till we come to this identical spot, on a Gore road, between townships, and right at the edge of this pine grove we settled down.

"We didn't know who owned the land, and ain't positive now, but we guessed it must be county land taken for taxes. We had seventeen dollars that we'd begged an' hung on to, and with this we got together enough to make a start. Then we built this cabin, log by log, and when it was done we spruced up the best we could an' went over to the village an' got married, for before we'd always lived like brother

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an' sister. I give the min'ster a dollar, but he handed it back to me. He was a decent kind of feller.

"No, I s'pose you never heard of a poorer couple than we be. We've been years here, and we've worked like beavers, but you see, the land's so terrible poor an' thin that the yield is small. But we've enough to eat an' drink, and the clothes we need is of the commonest kind, for we never go beyond the limits of this clearin' 'cept now an' then to the store. We're just as happy, however, as the day is long, and no money would tempt me to leave this spot.

"If I was worth a million to-day, I'd build me a better house an' get some farmin' tools which I actually need, and then I'd found a home for orphans. Me an' Maggie often talk it over; we've had our fill of the city. We're quite religious, too. Maggie can read real well, and Sundays she reads to me from the Bible, and between us we've fixed up a religion to

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suit our case. It's founded on one verse, —'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' "

Now wasn't that a funny story to hear away back there in the woods! It's a caution what odd people there are in the world.

When it come bed-time I begun to wonder where they was goin' to put me up, for there seemed to be only one room. But this difficulty was overcome by the woman, who fixed up a screen of grain bags before her bunk. My bed was made up on the floor.

The man an' I stayed outside till she got to bed; then we turned in for the night. The strange story he'd told me kept me awake thinkin' it over, and the moonlight shone in through the winder directly on my face; so it was pretty hard to drop off to sleep. I did drop into a doze after a bit, however, but I was awakened by a desire to scratch. I seemed literally covered with fleas. Now, one flea is enough

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to make an ordinary man wild, but when it comes to seventy-five hundred million pesky fleas dancin' over your helpless body, and every now an' then stoppin' to take a nip—well, no words can describe it.

I sat up an' looked about. Sweet slumber held the waifs of New York, as their harmonious snorin' denoted. The moonlight filled the room. Outside I could hear the soft summer wind purring through the pines.

"There's the place for me," I says to myself, and tiptoed noiselessly to the door. My gosh! how the fleas bit! Once outside the house I tore off my shirt, and turnin' it inside out, slapped it against the corner of the cabin, in hopes of dislodgin' a few of my tormenters. Just then I heard a gruesome "whoop! whoop!" and turnin', saw two long-eared deer hounds puttin' for me from the direction of the barn.

Say! it didn't take me long to get round the corner of that shanty. But the hounds

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was on my trail. I hoped to reach the door before them, but the pace was too hot for me when I got 'round front, for had I paused a moment, they'd have been upon me. So I grabbed my shirt tight an' dug in my toes as I reached a corner.

"Whoop! whoop!" the hounds come on. I could turn quicker'n they, and I gained slightly. The woodyard was just at the rear of the cabin, and as I sailed round this side, my poor feet suffered from the sharp chips. The hounds seemed in fine fettle an' come on bravely, every second breath lettin' out a whoop! whoop! that 'ud lift the hair of a stuffed cat.

My breath was givin' out an' I felt that "dog meat" was to be my fate. The hounds grew cunnin', and twisted themselves 'round the corners like a band-saw. Say! I must have been goin' a mile a minute 'bout that time. I never'll have any great respect for the speed of deer hounds again. But they can holler. Law me! it's the most terrible sound you ever

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heard, and think of two of 'em right at your heels an' you naked as the day you was born! Gosh! it gives me the shivers even now!

Well, as I flew 'round that shanty for the hundred an' fortieth time, I caught a glimpse of two white-robed people standin' in the door an' heard 'em holler at the hounds as I passed. The door was open behind 'em. When I come 'round again I swung out slightly so's to make a good turn, and dashed into the cabin with the yell of a wild Injun.

I had the sheet off the bed and around me before the woman had picked herself up, for I'd keeled her over as I entered. I don't believe that couple ever had as good a laugh in their lives as they had then, and them two dum hounds stood waggin' their tails in the doorway.

But it was no laughin' matter for me. My feet was all cut up an' bled like everything. Seein' my condition, they stopped laughin' for a minute or so an' bathed

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my feet. But even as they was bindin' up my sores I could hear 'em sniggle to 'emselves.

There was no more sleep that night, and strangest of all—no more fleas—nary a flea. I must have scart 'em out of the cabin. We sat there in the moonlight an' talked religion till the sun come up. You never heard such talk as that man and woman put up. Hang it! I sometimes think they had it about right, for what they did believe in was the Simon pure article.

Now, where do you think I found the Willoughby farm to be when I looked the next day? Why, right under my feet! The couple had squatted on it.

"Be you goin' to put us off?" says they to me with big eyes, when I told 'em the facts.

"It's a lost farm," says I in reply, takin' up the reins, "and you've found it. In Canada," says I, "findin' is keepin', and the farm's yours forever an' ever."

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Then I drove off, after givin' the woman a dollar.

I told the old man all about it when I got back to town.

"You did right, George," he says, "quite right. But see that the farm is deeded to them properly, so that I won't have to pay the taxes."

He'd a queer mixture of good an' bad in him, had the old man. He'd dicker up to the very edge of the pit, but you'd find him at church Sunday mornin'.

The Cold Girl from Bald Mountain

One day I got a telegram at Tamworth to hurry to Tweed to attend Division Court there on a case I knew all about.

It was in January, and cold. Well, cold ain't no name for it. It was thirty below if a point, and I wrapped up for the occasion. I had one of them old-fashioned Scotch shawls—about twenty feet long an' four wide, you know; lots of people had 'em them days, and this shawl I wrapped 'round my shoulders an' body over my ulster, so that the cold didn't have much chance to get at me. I wore a warm pair of woolen gloves, and over them a heavy pair of fur gloves with big gauntlets, but even then my hands would grow numb if I didn't keep

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poundin' 'em on my knees. I had a rattlin' good horse for a long, fast trip; as tough a beast an' as brave-hearted as ever drew a cutter out of a pitch-hole without stickin' his heels through the dasher.

But he had one fault: He interfered bad, and whenever he struck, it evidently hurt the poor cuss, for he'd go off on three legs for a spell like a dog. It used to make me awful mad, for he'd be sure to make an exhibition of himself just when we was enterin' a village, and I was sensitive about my rigs always. Pads or nothin' 'ud do him any good, until I hit upon the plan of givin' him one hard swipe with the whip along the back the moment he struck. This did all very well for a time, and then a worse evil resulted. He come to know that a swipe of the whip follered each strike, and to avoid this, the moment his heels knocked together he'd dart into the air like a cannon ball an' run for all he was worth, until he felt certain the whip had been forgotten.

THE COLD GIRL

He was a good, game horse, but he did have his faults.

Well, this day I left Tamworth in the early mornin' an' started due north for Tweed. The sun shone round an' yellow as a gold dollar, and with no more warmth in it than a pancake three days old. The snow was very deep an' the road full of pitch-holes, so it kept me well shaken up.

About two miles this side of a little Irish village I come upon a girl walkin' in the same direction I was goin'. She stepped out into the snow to let me pass, but I hauled up, and throwin' down the buffalo robe, said curtly:—

“Jump in if you want a ride.”

She wasn't slow in complyin', and I drove on without another word. I had my face wound 'round with a muffler, so that I could only see straight ahead, and I didn't feel much like talkin'.

When we'd left the village behind us, I asked her where she was goin'. She named a settlement some ten miles further along.

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"Where've you come from?" I asked again.

"From the Bald Mountings," says she, in a low voice.

"Dum cold place!" says I.

"It is," says she; "very cold at the Mounting."

"Walked?" says I.

"Yessir—all the way," says she.

"Been workin' out?" says I.

"No—goin' to," says she.

"Hard times at the Mountain?" I says.

"Awful hard," says she, and shivered. Then I felt her shake all over. I looked at her in the face. She wasn't bad-lookin' by a jug full, but her lips was blue an' her teeth was chatterin'.

"Great Scott!" says I, "you're freezin' to death!"

"I AM cold," says she.

I unwound the Scotch shawl from about me, and biddin' her stand up, I wrapped that shawl about her from her head to her

THE COLD GIRL

knees. Then I gave her my inside pair of mittens, and she looked more comfortable.

I drove on for a few miles in silence, and then inquired:—

“Feelin’ warmer?”

“Fine an’ warm now,” says she.

I could see her eyes glistenin’ above the shawl. Over the hills we went, the snow cracklin’ like breakin’ glass. Gosh! it was terrible cold! How that girl had endured to walk all the way from Bald Mountain in a thin calico gown, with a half-worn pair of mittens an’ light boots, was more’n I could tell.

“She’s good grit,” I thought, for she sat there beside me an’ would have frozen stiff before sayin’ she was cold.

“They grow good stock at the Bald Mountain,” I said to myself, and at that moment my horse struck. In a second he sprung forward, crazy with pain an’ fear. I saw my companion fly back over the seat like a stone from a catapult. But

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I had no time to think of her fate, for in a moment more the cutter struck a pitch-hole an' I found myself sprawlin' in the snow.

I quickly pulled myself together an' started back to look up my lady from Bald Mountain. I didn't worry about the horse. He'd prob'ly stop after he got tired.

Now, say ! I don't want you to laugh, for it really was no laughin' matter. Remember, the girl was poor an' was goin' to work out. I did laugh, myself, I must own ; but I hadn't oughter.

You know, she was all tied up in that shawl, wound 'round an' 'round like a 'Gyptian mummy, her arms close to her sides.

Well, when she was jerked backwards out of the cutter she reversed, so to speak, and come down head on, right into the soft, fleecy snow, sinkin' in almost to her knees. That was the condition in which I found her. One foot hung down

THE COLD GIRL

kinder helpless like, but the other stuck up in the air there like a signal of distress, and feebly twisted about. Darned if it wasn't one of the comicallest things you ever see! There she was—stuck like a post in the snow, and it didn't take me many seconds to get her out.

I just grabbed her 'bout the legs an' yanked. She came out kerflop, but just about smothered. She'd had on a straw hat with a narrow rim an' one red feather, and now all that was to be seen of this hat was the rim, and this was about her neck.

I stood her up an' dug the snow out of her face an' hair. All the time I could hear her mumblin' behind the shawl. Then I unwound her, and no sooner was her arms free than she grabbed that shawl, and slammin' it down in the road, stamped on it, her eyes flashin'.

"You villain!" she cried. "You did it a-purpose!"

"For the love of Heaven!" says I,

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"be calm. What in the world is the matter with you?"

"You did it a-purpose!" she fairly yelled again.

"Did what a-purpose?" says I.

"You villain!" she snorted. "Wrap-pin' me' round an' 'round with that shawl just so I'd be throwed out an' make a show of myself!"

The joke of the thing struck me all of a sudden. She thought I'd deliberately upset her in the snow. I laughed aloud, and this made her so mad that she fairly danced.

"Where is my hat?" she cried—"where is my feather?"

I pointed to the rim about her neck. This fresh disaster made her more furious.

"Find my feather!" she moaned. "Find my pretty feather!"

I crawled into the hole she made in the snow bank, and after a bit rescued the feather. She snatched it from my hand

THE COLD GIRL

angrily. I tried to pacify her, but she wouldn't have it. She wouldn't wear the shawl. She threw my gloves at me, and swore she'd freeze, but she would go no further with me.

I saw it was no use, so I picked up my poor shawl and gloves, and like the perpetrator of some great crime, slunk away from offended innocence. The girl really was a terrible fool.

I found my horse all right—about a quarter of a mile ahead—he havin' been stopped by a wood-sleigh.

About two years after that I happened to be in Tweed one day, when a woman with a broad grin on her face stopped me on the street an' said:—

“Don't you know who I be?”

“You've got me there,” says I.

“I'm the girl from Bald Mountings,” says she, showin' her teeth.

Say! It's a caution what wonderful teeth you'll find in the back townships.

“That may be,” says I, “but I'm un-

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acquainted with the aristocracy of that locality," I says in a good-natured tone.

"Don't you remember the ride we had that cold winter's day?" says she, and looked fair into my face.

It come to me like a flash. She watched the smile come into my eyes, an' I remembered the occasion.

"I thought you was pretty mad with me," says I, with a grin.

"I was, for a long time," says she, "but I made up my mind, after a bit, it wasn't your fault, and that you was really very kind to me."

"How did you ever get out of there alive?" says I.

"I did freeze my ears," she says, "but I footed it all the way."

"Workin' here?" I inquired.

"No, I'm married now," says she, without the least bashfulness. "My man runs a livery stable, and he says he knows you real well. When I told him, he says: 'Yes, I know George,—everybody

THE COLD GIRL

knows George. There ain't the least particle of harm in George. He only likes a good joke.' "

Then I thought of that left foot twistin' about in the air, and I come to the conclusion that her man had sized me up about right.

The Calgary Poet

If there ever was a feller completely lost in the world, it was a young chap I run across out in Calgary, one Christmas week, when I was snowed in there.

I was travellin' for a Montreal firm then, and used to get 'round to Calgary about once a year. A remarkable little town is that, but a most terrible lonesome place in which to be snowbound.

This young feller who I'm tellin' you about was clerk in the post-office out there. A tall, lanky, awkward chap he was, with clear, big, brown eyes an' as pleasant a face as you ever want to see. Me an' him was friends the minute we set eyes on one another, and every night after office hours he'd come down to the hotel an' play checkers with me for a while, and then

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we'd drift into tellin' yarns about when we was little fellers, for it was Christmas week, you know, when one is always a bit soft-hearted if he amounts to shucks in the world, and, as it turned out, the post-office chap was a farmer boy, too, born an' raised in New Hampshire. How he come to drift out to Calgary he never told me, and I forgot to ask him.

Well, sir, I told him all about me an' Ed an' Jane, and the fun we used to have together, and he'd sit an' listen, them big eyes of his drinkin' it all in. I never told a yarn to any one who enjoyed it more.

Ed, you know, died just when he'd come to be a young man an' full of promise, and when I told the chap about him, and how he used to play the fiddle by the hour an' make up fairy stories, his eyes glistened a bit, and I kinder felt queer myself.

Say! You'd oughter known Ed. He was all right. I've met many fellers up

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an' down the country—good an' bad—but I never met any one, man, woman or child, that I liked as I did him. Father an' mother an' Jane, they was all dear to me; but Ed—well, now you know, I can't just put it the way I want to.

You see, we was boys together on the old farm, and us two kids was all there was in the big world. We didn't know nothin' about anybody else. The world was made for us alone, and we roamed up an' down the face of that farm, never darin' to go beyond the line fence, (for father had forbid us), just a-wonderin' and a-findin' out.

You'd ought to a-heard Ed tellin' me an' Jane about Hell. It would be on a warm summer evenin', when the sun went down red an' the three of us 'ud be settin' on the rail fence at the head of the lane, while the folks did the milkin'. He'd begin soft an' shivery about the sun, and would lead on to the judgment day when Gabriel would blow his horn, and the

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earth 'ud be burnt up an' the dead would all stand before God—the good people on the right hand an' the bad people on the left. Jane 'ud be blubberin' by this time, but that was what Ed liked. Then he'd have us in the lake of fire an' brimstone, and describe the Old Boy standin' on the brink, gnashin' his teeth at us, till even he got scart himself, and we'd creep to the house a-holdin' hands—Jane in the middle—and hang 'round mother, not darin' to go to bed in the dark.

My! What an imagination Ed did have! If he'd only lived, he'd made a name for himself sure. There wasn't anything one knew that the other didn't. We liked the same things to eat, and what the one had the other had to have, or there'd been a row.

I remember once father brought me home a pair of plug boots, with blue tops an' copper toes,—but I'll tell you about that another time. We used to fight an' quarrel between us, me an' Ed, but it

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didn't take long to forget all about it. When I got into dispute with the boys at school I was a great feller for arguin' about an' darin' 'em to do this an' that before comin' to fists. I never really took to fightin' at school, not bein' naturally clever at it; but Ed was a holy terror. Just let a boy pitch into me, and he was at him like a cat, cryin' to beat the band an' smashin' right an' left. Why, he'd lick a feller twice his size in two shakes of a lamb's tail, he was that furious. There wasn't anything to do but to run, and he was such a little feller, too.

When we growed up we wasn't so communicative to one another, but our hearts was just the same, and when he died,—well, now you know, it just mellered me down, and I've been a bit soft-hearted ever since.

I run on just like this to the Calgary chap, and he'd set an' listen just as I told you. Well, one night I told him about a time when father an' mother had gone

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to prayer meetin' of a winter's night, and me an' Ed an' Jane was left all alone, and how Ed got out his fiddle, which he dasn't play when father was about,—fiddles bein' considered wicked,—and played to me an' Jane just whatever come in his head.

Ed must certainly a-been a wonder with the fiddle, for, as I told this chap, one time years after, when I was in Boston, I went to hear a feller play who had the name of bein' the crack fiddler of the world. And he was an almighty good player, too, but he couldn't make the fiddle talk the way Ed could. Jane could back me up in this. Why say! When he'd shut his eyes an' play "Robin Adair," your soul 'ud go right out of you, and you'd wake up when he was done with your mouth wide open.

The next evenin', after we'd played a few games of checkers, my Calgary friend took a piece of paper from his pocket an' handed it to me, kinder sheepish like.

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“It’s about Ed’s playin’ to you an’ Jane,” he said.

I took the paper an’ glanced it over. It was poetry, done in a neat, round hand, as plain as print. Here’s the identical piece in my pocket-book now. Kind of rusty, ain’t it?—but it’s his writin’, just as he put the words down in his bedroom that night in Calgary.

THE LITTLE FIDDLE ED PLAYED ON

Sarsarty was the fiddler’s name,
An’ he could play,
Well, I should say!
’Twas a whole circus an’ a shinny game
To hear him make that fiddle talk,
An’ laugh an’ cry’s if like to die;
He made it dance, he made it walk,
He made it sing, he made it sigh;
He sent the notes clear up to Mary,
An’ then way down to the Old Harry;
He knew no doubt what he was about;
He fairly set me cryin’ once,
An’ then he made me laugh right out—
I felt as sheepish as a dunce.
But arter all is said an’ done—
Arter all the fine notes he ’ud take—
’Twan’t no sech music’s Ed ’ud make
With the little fiddle he played on.

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That was the cutest little fiddle !
 It was as black
 As a factory stack—
It allers seemed ter me a riddle
 Where all them pretty sounds 'ud stay,
They was so sweet, so shy, so neat;
 An' then the way that Ed 'ud play !
There wa'n't nobody but 'ud say,
 When round the dancers gaily went,
“ Tip 'm the wink an' he could beat
 The man as made the instrument.”
It was delicious jes' to feel
The bow a-tunin' off a reel—
Back an' for'ard, toe an' heel,
 Your eye a-dancin' with your feet,
 Your partner lookin' flushed an' sweet;
Not a false step, not a break,
Sech was the music Ed 'ud make
 With the little fiddle he played on.

But in the chimney-corner, home—
 A winter night,
 By candle light,—
The sweetest music seemed to come.
 You'd hear the water laughin', dancin',
The birds 'ud sing, the sleigh-bells ring;
 You'd fairly see the horses prancin',
An' then so low, so sweet an' slow,
 You'd hear the fairies in the air
 A-singin' to 'emselves up there
A verse each time he drewed the bow;
 An' Jane an' me, aside his knee,
'Ud sit an' cry an' laugh together,
 An' watch the flickerin' in the fire,

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An' speculate an' wonder whether
The angels in the holy choir,
From their gold harps sech notes 'ud shake,
As the lovely music Ed 'ud make
With the little fiddle he played on.

'Tain't real awful bad, is it? You know, I don't show this to many people, for they wouldn't appreciate it, not knowin' Ed an' his style of playin'; but you'll understand. Now, I ain't no poet, or ever expect to be, and I don't know good from bad, but this here bit of paper is gold and diamonds to me, for that Calgary feller just saw right into my heart, and put down on paper feelin's I could never express. Here's another. I'll show you this, seein' as you liked the first.

I WANT TER GO BACK HOME

The city's way ain't mine, nor it wa'n't Ed's way, neither,
The air here never smelt a bit home-like to either;
Fer Ed, you know, an' me was farmer boys, an' grew
Where the old New England hills stare right up through
The topsa'l clouds at Heaven. We lads was brothers,—
Never knew a wrangle, fer what was one's was t'others;
An' when hard luck an' taxes jes' driv us off the land,
We went right out'n the world, a-hand a-holt o' hand.

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We knocked about consi'drable, but only fer a spell,
An' I'd jes' a-got a-thinkin' 'at all was goin' well,
When Ed—well, Ed he sez to me—"George, come!—
 " I want ter go back home!"

Ed was a han'some feller's ever you'd wish to see;
Eyes and hair's black's a coal, and figger straight's a tree.
Two years younger'n me an' everyone took to him quick,
If gittin' loved ain't nat'ral, Ed sartainly knew the trick.
But he worked too hard an' went completely down in a
 heap;
Couldn't eat nor nothin', 'ud wake so quick in his sleep
An' set bolt up, while his eyes 'ud wildly roam,
'S he'd say—"George," he'd say, so wistful like to me,
 " I want ter go back home!"

What's a feller to do with his brother a-sayin' that
In the pleadin'est kind o' way? I could only gently pat
His hot head with my hand, for I knowed (an' it hurt me
 sore),
It wa'n't no use to say a word—there wa'n't no home no
 more!
The typhoid fever had 'im, he didn't know none he see;
He'd call his friends queer names, but allers say *George*
 to me.
I never left him a minit, though it hurt clean through to
 hear
The way he'd keep a talkin' 'bout old times held so dear,
An' things I'd haft fergotten, an' ev'ry once an' awhile
His eyes 'ud snap an' sparkle—he'd grab my hand an'
 smile
The beseechin'est smile, as he'd say—"Come! George,
 come!—
 " I want ter go back home!"

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Sometimes right in the night he'd wake me out o' a drowse;
"Git ready, George," he'd say, "we must be fetchin' the
cows;

"Chokecherries's ripe's you'd wish 'em up erlong the lane;
"The cows ain't fer away—I kin hear old Mulley plain,
"A-ringin' her bell. I'll run you from here to the
shed."

Then I'd drop plum down at his side an' cry, "Fer God's
sake, Ed,

"Let up, er you'll break my heart!" But he didn't know
a thing.

"I hate this water," he'd say. "Fetch me a drink from
the spring,

"Er a cup o' Limeback's milk—I see the rich cream foam.

"Say! George—what are we stayin' here for?

"I want ter go back home!"

He jes' went down by inches; I knowed he had to go,
An' I braced myself to meet it, though a man's but a man,
you know.

Say! What's the love o' Heaven, when all is done an'
said,

'Side o' the love o' brothers who've allers had one bed?
He went quite suddint at last; he was talkin' the same old
way,

'Bout helpin' me cut the wood so's both o' us could play;
When his face lit up the sweetes' I ever hope to see,
An' he squeezed my hand an' "George," he says to me—
"The pussy willer's blossomin', the egg plum's all erblow;
"Red-finned suckers in the creek's all o' 'em on the go;
"Same old robin's buildin' her nest in the silver maple's
limb;

"I long to git my boots off an' go in fer a swim;

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“Listen them birds tweedlin!—how splendid fresh an’
sweet

“Them lilacs smell! I swan if that there bob-o-link don’t
beat

“The grandes’ choir fer music!” An’ then he riz an’ threw
Himself right in my arms. “Oh, George,” he says, “it’s
you!

“I hear the bells a-ringin’ in the old church dome—
“I want ter go back home!”

It’s many a year since I buried Ed a-side o’ dad an’ mam;
I’ve tried to fit these new ways, but I am jes’ what I am.
These songs I hear ain’t ha’f ’s sweet’s what the birds ’ud
sing,

I want ter smell them lilacs, I want a drink from the spring;
I want ter hear the water laugh in the rapids in the creek,
I want ter see old “Darb ” ag’in, so lazy, fat an’ slick;
I want ter hear the wind at night a-sobbin’ thro’ the trees,
I want ter feel complete erlone, with God ’s all who sees;
I want ter see them graves up there, as placid as their dead,
I want ter say my prayers ag’in an’ go to bed with Ed.
Fer my heart’s up there in the hills, no odds how fur I roam—
I want ter go back home!

This is my favorite, and you can better
believe it struck a tender spot in my heart.

I met a feller once in the train between
Toronto and Winnipeg, and got to talkin’
with him. He was a college professor
down at McGill in Montreal, and thinkin’
he would be a good judge of poetry, I

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showed him them two pieces an' asked his opinion, not sayin' a word of my connection with 'em.

"Well," says he, "the woods is full of this kind of stuff—maudlin sentiment. Give a man," says he, "a soft heart an' a woman's liver, and he'll flood the press with this kind of poetry."

I felt kinder taken back, but I kept my temper an' asked him:—

"What kind of poetry is good poetry?" says I.

"Good poetry," says he, "is beautiful and artistic conceptions expressed in polished English." You see, I remember it word for word. "Good poetry," says he, goin' on, "is divine—an inspiration to the cultivated mind. This stuff," says he, handin' me back my poor verses, "is just silly gush."

Say! That was a staggerer to me, and I thought he had me. But when I got to Winnipeg I set down in my own room an' hauled out the poetry an' read it over

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careful. "Blame!" says I, to myself, "it reads smooth enough an' it certainly was just as everything happened." And I made up my mind then an' there that the poetry, or the paintin', or the scenery that touched your heart an' made a better man of you was good enough for me, and that I'd stick by my Calgary poet through thick and thin.

You can see for yourself that every line means somethin'. He's worked in a lot of the stuff I told him, and some parts ain't strictly true. For instance, in the first verse he says, "Where the old New England hills," an' so forth. We was Canada boys, me an' Ed, and I asked him why he "worked" in "New England."

"Well," says he, "I got the idea in my head of the hills stickin' their noses up through the clouds, and I wanted to work it in. There ain't any high hills where you was born, but New England is full of 'em. Then I wanted the New

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England hills in any way, George," he says, kind of grinnin' foolish like, "for I was born up in North Conway, and I kinder like to celebrate them old mountains when I get a chance."

Here's the only other piece he wrote for me. He struck it off right under my nose in about ten minutes.

DURIN' P'TRACTED MEETIN'

Down in Carterville las' winter—

You know old Ebenezer Snider?—

Nose on 'im jes' 's sharp's a splinter,

Color o' nine-y'ar apple cider;

Good preacher, though, 's ever you see,

Sound at heart 's a white oak tree.

Wall, to the p'int: As I was sayin',

Eb was holdin' p'tracted meetin';

Had the hull district singin' an' prayin',

An' gittin' converted. "Time was fleetin' Fast," he said, "'s a blue-winged pigeon," 'S he hustled 'em up ter git religion.

You know Jed Pringle's second daughter

Bethilda?—gal with sparklin' eyes?

Stout 's Jane, but a little shorter,

Bang-up cook on cakes an' pies.

Likelies' gal 'n the place, it's said,

Face an' figger 'way ahead.

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Bethilda she sot 'mong the seekers,
I sot over agin the wall;
But Lord! she couldn't keep them peekers
O' her'n from wand'rin' 'round at all.
Thar wa'n't 'nought else 's I could see—
Them eyes they jes' converted me.

First thing I knowed I was sittin'
'Side o' Bet on the pen'tent seat;
'Tain't twice 'n a life a feller's gittin'
So strong a call from eyes so sweet.
Conviction er love, no matter whether,
Bethilda an' I driv home together.

Stars out bright an' moon a-beamin',
Snow on the ground a-dazzlin' white;
Clouds hangin' low in the west a-dreamin',
Never see a perfecter night.
So pure was the earth an' sky above,
You couldn't resist a-talkin' love.

Give me a hoss as feels his feedin',
Head right up an' feet a-flyin';
A hoss 's won't disgrace his breedin',
Trot ter win if he was dyin';
A hoss 's don't need much command,
So's a feller kin drive with jes' one hand.

“ Wall,” I sez, “Bethilda—Bet,” sez I,
A-feelin' my way each word, you see,
An' puttin' a p'int ter all, so sly:
“ S'pose you allers ride home with me ? ”
Heard the man chuckle in the moon,
As she whisper'd, “ Jim, I'd jes' as soon.”

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The same old story—jes' the same,—
Said in 'bout the same old way;
But Eb he says it's a 'tarnal shame
We didn't go for'ard from that day.
Lost religion—bad ter do it—
But we got married an' that's next to it.

Did you ever hear the like of that! It's old Ebenezer Snider to the life. Bethilda Pringle was the girl's name. I used to go to school with her. She was a beauty all right, and as full of the old scratch as the next one. Jim Vandewater is the feller who married her, and a dum good husband he made her, too. They're rich now,—yes, got a three hundred-acre farm an' grown-up children. Bethilda an' Jim was tickled to death when I showed 'em this piece. Got a copy of it now in the family Bible.

I tell you, that Calgary poet was certainly lost in the world. I read the poetry in the papers now an' then, and hope that some time I'll run across his name at the bottom of a piece.

Jackson, that was his name,—Arthur

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Jackson, Calgary, N. W. T. Did you ever see it? No? Well, I wish you had, for that feller had a heart in him an' a love of fun, and was as good a checker player as I ever run up against.

The Willipers at Newport

The most remarkable thing about a Rhode Island summer is the fact that the Sundays are, with rare exceptions, days of ideal beauty. It may rain on Saturday or on Monday, but on Sunday we expect to find a warm sun come out of the sea to the east of Block Island, followed by a gentle and invigorating breeze that is fully charged with vital gases.

It was on one of these golden Sundays that Little Jack Williper took his father and mother to Newport to see the sights and incidentally to enjoy the sail on the "Day Star."

Little Jack Williper had an imagination; his parents had none. This, of course, was owing to the fact that Nature was compelled to bestow upon Little Jack

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some wonderful gift to even up matters, for she had made a sad mess of his body, which was long where it should be short, and flat where it should be round. He had used crutches ever since he could hold himself upright, and like all lame children he made the most of his opportunities, and could get over the ground by means of these wooden legs at a surprisingly rapid gait. His face was a study in interrogation points; his eyes constantly asked questions; the mouth, the ears—in fact, every line in his face curved into a query. He was now sixteen years old (looking twelve), and sought knowledge, principally concerning kings, princes, dukes, and other gentlemen of title. This was owing to the course of reading he had taken, for when a mere child he had read a story about Peter the Great, and had been so fascinated with it that his constant request to his father for years had been to bring to him from the Public Library, books about the nobility.

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In consequence, Little Jack had an exalted idea of life far beyond his station, for his father was a "dresser tender" in a cotton mill, a place where men work the year round in an atmosphere 110 degrees above zero, for \$10.50 a week. His mother had been a spooler tender in the same mill, but since the birth of Little Jack she had ceased being a "new woman," and now did nothing outside save the sewing of "ready-made garments" for the "cheapest clothing house on earth." Mrs. Williper knew thoroughly the sound economic principle that to sell cheap one must buy cheap, and that to work for the "cheapest clothing house on earth," "benefactors of the masses," etc., meant 36 cents a day, at most 40.

Strange as it may appear, the home in which Little Jack lived with his father and mother never seemed to him the least bit mean or squalid. He never remembered when there were no odds and ends of shoddy scattered over the floor, and

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unwashed dishes sitting on the table, for Mrs. Williper, being bred to a spooler and subsequently post-graduated at a sewing machine, had not found opportunity to cultivate housewifery, after the traditional New England fashion.

Little Jack had a special chair by his own window, in which sat three half-starved geraniums, which annually brought forth as many more fragile flowers after severe travail. In this window seat he read his stories of kings, etc., sometimes to himself, but more often to his mother, who pretended to be delighted, and actually became interested in exciting places if Little Jack warned her in advance that something good was coming. And when he was not reading he sat in his window and thought, the result being that he quickly evolved an imaginative world, in which diamonds and gold were as stones are, and where ermine and purple and fine laces were the common garments of the day. He knew well every emperor or

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king, from Solomon to young Alexandria of Servia. He had wallowed in the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" during his fourteenth and fifteenth years; and so great was his exaltation of spirit after reading the resonant Gibbonian record of some stirring event, that at times his mother would declare that his face fairly shone.

It was a handsome young man, with a Great Dane at his heels, who had given Little Jack Williper the five dollars, on the strength of which he had invited his parents to see Newport with him. This handsome young man, with the handsomer dog, had no excuse but idleness for walking through the little lane leading off Bull Dog Square, where the Willipers lived, and where he found Little Jack seated on the doorstep, reading.

The peculiar and complete deformity of the child attracted him, and he stopped a moment to inquire what he was reading. It was Carlyle's "Frederick the Great,"

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and Little Jack, hearing the request of this elegant young man, immediately gave a twitch to his face, which screwed into one symmetrical note of interrogation, and asked:—

“Do you really think ‘Frederick the Great’ was a bigger man than Napoleon Bonaparte?”

“Love of God!” cried the strange young man, who straightway put his hand in his vest pocket, and finding a five-dollar note, handed it to Little Jack with the remark: “Throw that rot away, sonny, and go down the river and breathe the fresh air. The book is too old for you.”

“But was he?” persisted Little Jack.

“Damned if I know,” replied the young man, as he and the Great Dane continued their way.

There are a dozen or so seats on the deck of the “Day Star” forward, which are extra choice. Three of these seats were secured by the Willipers, by following the example of the early bird. Little

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Jack sat in the middle, with his father and mother, looking really grand in their Sunday best, on either side of him.

Williper Père was especially worthy of notice from the fact that he looked entirely happy, and yet not one single article of his clothing fitted him. His coat sleeves were too short; his trousers suffered from the same affliction; his collar was too big and his necktie roosted high. His face was white as chalk, consequent on the 110 degrees, and his hands had been dyed so many times that they were now a composite shade, most nearly like old gold. Nevertheless this man Williper was a trusted employee, a kind and loving husband and father, a man of great sympathies, sober and industrious, but wholly ignorant. He was perfectly satisfied with his position in the world and with his family, and the world was as fully satisfied with him. Williper Père was a grand success.

Little Jack had been to Crescent Park

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and Rocky Point a number of times with his parents, and he had enjoyed the ravishing delights of those beautiful shore resorts, where all is fairyland for good people and children, and all tawdryness and debauchery for those who are neither young nor good. But his soul yearned for Newport, the city of palaces, the home of princes and the Mecca of millionaires. Neither his father nor mother had ever visited Newport, so they were also much interested in its possibilities. Then they had five dollars to spend, every cent of it to be dissipated before the return to Bull Dog Square, as per previous solemn agreement.

Williper Mère had bought peanuts, freshly baked. The "Day Star" had not reached Field's Point before she brought the aforesaid peanuts from a wonderful bag which she always carried with her when she went great distances from home, like to the Public Market, to Shepard's, or "Down the Bay." This bag held

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lunch, popcorn, four apples, and the peanuts. Little Jack liked peanuts, so did his mother and father, and so did every man, woman and child on the steamer; for soon above the roar of the machinery could be heard that ponderous crunching incident to 2,000 pairs of jaws coming together upon 2,000 peanuts at the same instant. Peanuts are the especial delight of Rhode Islanders. Clams have their season, so likewise have frost fish and blueberries, but peanuts are perennial.

When the peanuts were consumed, the Willipers ate their lunch and the four apples, saving the popcorn for the beach. Incidentally they admired the scenery.

There is only one living creature which has a greater admiration for nature, expressed in silence through the eyes, than the city wage-earner, and that is the cow, who, having eaten of the green grass as much as she desires, chews her cud and dreamily looks out upon the fields with love and adoration. The workingman is less

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demonstrative than the cow, but he certainly enjoys much.

As the "Day Star" glided past Nayatt and Prudence, Williper Père absorbed all the beauty of the scene, munched his peanuts, and occasionally looked into the eyes of his wife. But he said no words. A highly educated man, seeing for the first time the wonderful beauties of Narragansett Bay thus unrolled, would have talked admiringly and entertainingly all the while to his companions, dilating on this and that especial charm. Beauty, like an electric shock, goes through such a man, exhilarating every nerve for the moment. Williper Père and the cow hold fast to impressions, and their lives are molded thereby.

Arriving at Newport, the Willipers found seats in a large 'bus, whose driver agreed to take his patrons, for a modest fee, the entire ten-mile drive, and incidentally to point out all the chief points of interest.

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Little Jack was in raptures, but strange to say, they had no sooner reached Bellevue avenue, with its marble palaces and magnificent cottages, than his heart fell. He expected something far grander. Here was a city, and Little Jack had his mind made up to deer-stocked parks, in the midst of which stood immense baronial halls with towers and battlements. There were to be ponds with white swans floating upon them, and princes and princesses playing about, with their tutors and nurses standing guardian near at hand. Instead, here were only great houses set in closely-cropped lawns, with men and women seated on the piazzas reading the Sunday papers, just as they do everywhere.

Here and there they passed elegant equippages containing beautifully gowned ladies on their way home from the morning service at church, and they were told that such and such a carriage belonged to so and so and cost so much; that the owner possessed many millions and had

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a yacht now lying at anchor in the harbor.

Suddenly, however, their loquacious driver turned, and holding his hand to the left of his mouth, whispered hoarsely :

“Keep your eyes on that little red-headed cuss in the next turnout we pass—him with the girl in white lollin’ beside ’im,—that’s the king of Saxonia.”

“Stop the ’bus !” yelled Little Jack Williper with a shrill scream, as he struggled frantically to get to his feet.

But the carriage containing the king and his fair companion had dashed by them, and all Little Jack could see was a glimmer of red hair and a white hand resting on a gold-headed cane. And from that day to this all kings in his imagination have red hair and carry golden-crowned walking sticks. He was naturally much disappointed because he had not got a better view of so exalted a personage, and the driver’s further remark that “dukes and princes was thick as flies at milkin’ time,” did not mollify him. He wanted

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to know an hundred things at once. "What was this king's name? where was Saxonia, and what was he doing here?"

The driver replied good-naturedly in the picturesque language of the handsome young man with the Great Dane who had one day strayed into Bull Dog Square, and turning to his horses, showed that as far as he was concerned the incident was closed.

After the drive the Willipers had lunch with ice cream in an English tea room on Bellevue avenue, which Williper Mère enjoyed immensely, and then they all went over to the beach, Little Jack racking along like a tin soldier, looking each moment as if he would go all to pieces. The bathers interested them ever so much, and they sat on the sand and munched their popcorn with delight. Little Jack would have it that the bathers were all of the nobility, and offered to bet his father and mother many times without naming the stakes that such and such a

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one was a king or a duke. He set his mind beyond argument on the fact that one plump, well-formed young lady must be a princess of the blood from the fact that she had red hair and the skin of her arms was snow white.

"She's a reigning princess, I'm sure, mother," he would say, and kept directing that parent's attention to her constantly.

Presently the fair princess left the water and came directly toward them, a smile of greeting in her eyes.

"Look! mother, look!" cried Little Jack. "She's coming our way!"

"Why, bless my soul, if it ain't Sarah Kelley's girl Mamie!" cried Mrs. Williper, whose vision had been weakened by her post graduate course.

"Hello, Mrs. Williper," said the princess, standing before them and shaking the water from her hair. "How on earth did you ever come to get 'way down here?"

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"Little Jack fetched me an' father," replied the mother, "with the money the gentleman gave him. But, do you know what, Mamie?"

"Don't! mother,—don't!" pleaded Little Jack, tugging at her sleeve.

"Well, I won't, dear—I won't tell her if you mind," his mother replied, soothingly.

"What was it, Mrs. Williper?" the wet princess inquired with considerable curiosity.

"Little Jack minds so I won't tell you that he spotted you for a real princess, 'cause you have red hair."

The cripple looked very sheepish at this unexpected betrayal of a family confidence, but the girl took it far from unkindly. She reached down, and with her plump hand patted Little Jack on the cheek.

"He knows a thing or two—that kid," she said. "Don't you mind, Little Jack. I'm as good as the best of them."

"Where be you workin' now, Mamie?"

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inquired Mrs. Williper, offering the young lady the bag of popcorn.

"Over to Olneyville, to Fletcher's," she replied. "I lost my job at the shoe-string business, and have gone back to the loom."

"You're too gay for your pay, I'm afraid," said Mr. Williper, solemnly.

"I intend to have a good time while I'm young and alive," replied the girl, defiantly. "We'll all be long enough in the churchyard. But my mother was a good woman before me, as you well know, Mrs. Williper, you an' she havin' wound at the same spooler, and I intend to be a good woman, too."

"Said well ! said well !" exclaimed Mr. Williper almost with enthusiasm. "Follow your mother's steps, Mamie, and you'll win out."

"You ain't married yet or nothin'?" queried Mrs Williper.

"Not yet, nor ever intend to be," was the sharp answer. "The man don't live as

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can have me work for him. I make my own money and I spend it myself. I'd look pretty tied to any of the men I know!"

"Married life might be worse, Mamie, it might be worse," said Mrs. Williper, soothingly. "See me an' father now, and how happy we be; and then we've got Little Jack here, the pride of our eyes an' comfort always."

"You're all right—all three of you, and many's the good word I've heard of you; but I'll take no chances on marryin'."

"It's a caution to me how you keep yourself so well and handsome," Mrs. Williper said, after a bit, looking up with admiration at the finely formed girl before her.

"It comes natural, I suppose," replied the princess of the loom. "The Lord knows I get little chance to groom myself, and weaving is not a job to sigh for in these times; but I think the tramp over to Olneyville from Smith's Hill in the

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morning does me good and fills my lungs with fresh air for the day. Then on Sundays I come down here or to "Crescent" and have a glorious bath. Oh, how good it feels! It's just the same as if I was a real princess, Little Jack."

"You've got the red hair and the white arms, anyhow," said the cripple, with an old-fashioned smile.

When Mamie had returned to take a final plunge in the surf, the Willipers journeyed back to Bellevue avenue and watched the fine ladies and gentlemen drive up and down in their carriages. They stood on a corner so that Little Jack might have a lamp-post to lean against, and found much pleasure in the gay panorama before them.

After a silence of some time Williper Père broke forth earnestly:—

"I'm danged, mother," he said, "if there's a girl in the hull lot we've seen as can hold a candle to Sarah Kelley's girl Mamie."

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Just then a gentleman who was passing, seeing Little Jack, paused, and pointing to him, inquired of Mr. Williper:—

“Your son?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Does he suffer much?”

“None at all, 'cept for readin' matter.”

“How strange.”

An embarrassing pause, during which Mrs. Williper looked indignant.

“Did he fall?”

“No, sir.”

“How did he come so, may I ask?”

“Born so.”

“Dear me, dear me; and you say he's happy?”

“Happy all the time, 'specially when readin' about kings and things.”

“Well I declare! Good day, sir.”

The gentleman raised his hat politely to Mrs. Williper, which mollified her at once, and passed on.

Father and mother looked questioningly into each other's eyes until Little

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Jack laid all doubts at rest by saying:—

“Wasn’t it funny that he should ask whether I’m ever unhappy and you both here!”

The sail home was delightful, rendered more so because Mamie Kelley joined them on the boat and insisted on staying with them so she might hear Little Jack tell about the queens and princesses he had met in his travels through the Public Library.

It was just supper time when they reached home, and after the dishes were cleared away and Mr. Williper had filled his pipe and gone to sleep—an inevitable occurrence—Little Jack talked over the events of the day with his mother, winding up with the remark:—

“Anyhow, mother, I’ve got a real king to think about, and Mamie Kelley’ll do for a princess till I find a better.”

The Willipers at the Pier

Ever since Little Jack Williper's Sunday excursion to Newport with his parents, on which occasion the five dollar bill—given him by the fine young gentleman with the finer Great Dane, who had strayed into Bull Dog Square—had been ruthlessly consumed to the last penny, it had been the ambition of Williper Père, Williper Mère and Little Jack to visit Narragansett Pier and gaze upon the magnificent hotels there situated, and behold that celebrated crescent beach where ladies bathed in white kid slippers and ballroom finery, and money flowed like water.

Mamie Kelley, the beautiful weaver, whom, it will be remembered, Little Jack mistook at Newport for a princess, because she had red hair and her arms and

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face were so plump and white, was inclined to doubt that ladies ever bathed in white kid slippers.

“Ah, forgot it,” she had said to Williper Mère, one warm night, when she sat with the Williper family on the doorstep of their tenement and sweltered in the hot air which slid up the alley from the Square. “They wear kid slippers—I don’t think! Little Jack has been fillin’ you up with stories out of his books.”

“Oh, I swear to goodness, Mamie,” Little Jack had cried, “I read it true and honest in the paper. Yes, and some of ’em wear corsets, too—sure’s you’re born, Mamie. I saw a picture of it, too.”

Little Jack’s positiveness had aroused the curiosity of even the phlegmatic princess, and it was decided then and there that a trip to the Pier should be enjoyed as soon as circumstances would permit.

Now, Newport is common to the alley population of Providence, and Easton’s

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Beach has done its fair share in the civilization of the "Great Unwashed." The eyes of Jean Baptiste Grandmaison, mule spinner from Manville; of John 'Enry 'Oldsworth, weaver of Olneyville; of Michael Angelo Papiti, banana incubator of Federal Hill; of Jerry Finnerty, truckman of Fox Point, had looked unabashed into the eyes of Vanderbilts, Astors and foreign diplomats and princes many times on Bellevue avenue, and the possessors of said first mentioned eyes had returned home more satisfied with themselves, having discovered that a millionaire and even a prince is only a man, generally not so well set up a man, either, as he who exercises daily in the gymnasium of toil.

But Narragansett Pier is a far-away land, a wonderful spot not to be gazed upon by common mortals. No boat then ran from Providence to the Pier. Jean, John, Michael and Jerry are not desired at the Pier, and it had been made very difficult for these friends and fellow citizens to

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indulge in such a trip, even though Narragansett was only a trifle further away than Newport. A railroad runs from Providence to the Pier, but it costs \$1.50 to make the round trip thereon, and \$1.50 is 15 per cent. on the weekly wage of the average steady and clever laborer in Rhode Island. It is a lot of money to those who dwell in the stifling precincts of Bull Dog Square, and the Willipers skinned and saved religiously for six weeks before they got together enough money to defray the necessary expenses of the trip. But when this was accomplished they immediately became happy. One day of pleasure was before them. What cared they for months of privation!

They chose a Thursday in August. It was a lovely day. Williper Père had got a day off by hiring a loafing dresser tender to take his place at an advance of 25 cents on his own pay. He was dressed in his blacks, with the same old high-roosting collar, and he looked just as

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bleached out, as awkward and as stolid as when we saw him on the "Day Star." Williper Mère, however, wore a new gown. It had cost \$4.87, ready made, and fitted like a glove. At least the saleslady had so informed her. To the casual observer it was one of those high-up-in-front and low-down-behind kind of dresses which are apt to make one doubt whether it is possible to fit the human female figure by machinery. Little Jack looked as usual. He was so crooked and twisted by his deformity that none ever saw his clothes. He sagged down in his crutches and stood waiting for the train, perfectly content with all things. Mamie Kelley, who joined them at the depot, having "flung her clothes on," as she described it, caused Little Jack's eyes to brighten immensely, for Mamie certainly had "flung on" a white muslin gown most artistically, and the morning sun in her hair made it ripple like a golden sea. Mamie made all her own clothes at odd

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times after work hours, and the Lord knows where she got her idea of style, but she evidently got it from somewhere, for she certainly knew how to look well. It was owing in part, no doubt, to her splendid figure and the graceful way she handled herself.

Mamie sat with Little Jack in the train and held his hand while he dilated on the wonderful doings of a certain Mary, Queen of Scots, of whom Mamie had never heard, but concerning whom Little Jack had read with much pleasure.

"I tell you she had a hard time of it," Little Jack said, with a sigh. "They killed every man she looked at, shet her up on a lonesome island, and wound up by cutting her head off. I swanny some of them old time kings and queens had no such soft snap as we think. Her name was Mary, just like your's," he added, after a brief pause. "I wonder did they call her Mamie."

Mamie Kelley laughed and patted the

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cripple's hand. "You're always making me out a princess or something, you dreamy kid. What do I care for Mary Scots? She's dead a long time, and here I am and here we go 'way down to the Pier to see all the rich people."

"Don't you ever wish to be rich, Mamie?" Little Jack inquired, looking up into her eyes.

"You bet your life I do," was the prompt reply.

"What would you do?"

"What would I do?" The girl gazed wistfully at the roof of the car. "I would first have a beautiful home with a green lawn around it, where I wouldn't have a thing to do; then I'd have two new dresses for every day in the month, then I'd go to New York and see the sights." The girl dropped her eyes and looked down at her companion and laughed. "Ah, fergit it," she said; "aint it silly to be a wishin'?"

Arriving at the Pier, the party made a

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bee line for the bathing beach, and, seating themselves upon the sand, watched the bathers. There were probably two hundred enjoying the surf that morning, and sure enough Little Jack quickly discovered a young lady in white kid slippers and dainty attire, promenading up and down the white sand, holding above her head a red silk parasol. The gentleman who accompanied her was a stalwart young man in a regulation bathing suit. The Willipers watched this couple closely, but to their disappointment the daintily arrayed lady did not go near the climbing surf creepers.

"She's just out to show her shape," Mamie said with disgust after a bit, and then she quoted, cocking her head airily :

"Mother, may I go out to swim?"

"Yes, my darling daughter.

"Hang your clothes on a hickory limb,

"But don't go near the water."

They soon forgot the lady in kid slippers and corsets, while watching the lively

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scene in the water before them. There were old bald-headed fat men, and scrawney bald-headed lean men; stout old women in big poke sun-bonnets, thin old women who shivered constantly; jolly young men and girls who romped in the surf, and timid people who crept to the water's edge and nibbled at a bath.

Williper Père was enjoying himself hugely. The old people in particular interested him. They looked so funny, puffing and blowing, and they were so outlandish as to figure.

"Aint it just horrid what shapes people have?" Williper Mère whispered to Mamie. "See that fat woman there, swashin' about. 'J'ever see the like? If I was her, I'd take a bath in my bedroom."

"Long as she don't mind, what need we care?" Mamie returned, philosophically. "She's natural, anyhow, and not like that cat promenading up and down."

Mamie evidently had taken a strong

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aversion to Miss Corsets and Kid Slippers, for her eyes stabbed her whenever she came in range. No one hates sham like the wage earner. The "Well, I'll be gol darned!" of the farmer, as a butterfly of the genus summer girl or a golf dude passes in his sight, is expressive of the most withering contempt. The plain people know honesty when they meet it on the street.

After the bathers had come from the water Williper Père manifested symptoms of hunger, so the party adjourned to "The Rocks" and ate their lunch, while the Atlantic slapped the shore with its long swell and out to sea tall ships moved up and down in the lane of commerce. How invigorating was the salt air! Little Jack expanded his lungs and looked up into his mother's face and laughed. The bleached face of Williper Père took on almost a rosy hue, and Mamie Kelley let down her glorious red hair and gave sea and sun their will of it.

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How hungry they were! But they had plenty to eat and plenty to toss to the sand pipers. While eating, Little Jack must tell a story.

Somewhere, sometime he had read about an old fisherman who used to fish from these same rocks year after year for black fish, and how one day he fell asleep with his pole in his hands. It was then that the king of the black fish seized the line and dragged the old fisherman into the water—down, down to the palace of the water babies, where he was well tended to, but from which he was never allowed to escape, “and perhaps,” Little Jack said, gravely, “he’s down there now, for all we know.”

“Who ever heard tell of water babies?” cried Williper Mère.

“Oh, yes they be—they be—oh yes!” insisted Little Jack. “Little water babies; they live in the water and float about and have a fairy godmother. Oh, I know it’s true all right, for a preacher wrote

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about them. There was a little boot-black—no, a chimney sweep it was, as fell into the water and was turned into a water baby. My, what a time he had!”

“How could a baby live in the water?” his mother asked, incredulously.

“Why, a frog as lived there told him how. Don’t frogs live in the water? Well, this frog was a big bull frog, and he told this chimney sweep water baby just how to do it. Anyway, he lived and got married and swam far out to sea.”

“I’ll bet there is water babies,” Mamie Kelley said, with a wink at Little Jack’s parents. “I remember once when I was in bathing down to Crescent, something caught hold of my toe and I put for shore. I sat down on the sand and held up my foot, and what do you think I saw but a water baby—a little naked water baby sittin’ a-straddle of my toe and hangin’ on to beat the band.”

“Now, didn’t I tell you!” cried Little Jack, clapping his hands. “But what

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did you do with the water baby?" he inquired, eagerly.

"Well, of course I was surprised at first. Then I reached down to pick the kid up, but he just twisted up one corner of his mouth, and sayin' 'not on your life!' takes a header into the water."

"If that don't beat all!" Little Jack exclaimed, and he looked wistfully down at the water, hoping that he, too, might see a real water baby, while Mamie and his parents grinned at each other knowingly.

There is a rest in the slap, slap, slap of the sea—rest and peace. Mother of us all, the sea soothes her children when they come down to her and lie by her side. Care is forgotten. Realities fade away and dreams come. Dreams certainly came to Williper Père when he drew off to the shade of a large boulder, if the sounds which came from his direction were authentic. Little Jack placed his head in his mother's lap and went to

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sleep, and the two women stood guard and looked out to sea.

After the nap they all marched up the Ocean Drive and saw what they could see of the hotels and cottages. It was great amusement for them to watch four children—two little girls and two boys, all daintily dressed in blue and white, playing tennis on the lawn of one of the great hotels. Mamie held Little Jack upon the curbing so that he might see. The four children were very graceful and very active. They drove the ball back and forth with amazing speed.

As they were thus standing a lady came down from the hotel—a tall, angular woman, with a set, severe face. She noticed Little Jack and started at his peculiar knotted appearance.

“Dear me,” she said to Williper Mère, “are you his mother?”

“Yes ’um,” replied that lady, slowly.

The tall woman came nearer and whispered:

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“Born so?”

“Yes ’um.”

Another look at Little Jack and then another deep whisper:

“Which hotel are you stopping at?”

“We aint stopping anywhere, bein’ just down from the city for the day,” Williper Mère replied, stupidly.

The tall woman opened her hand and placed what it held in that of Mrs. Williper. “Buy him what he would like best of all in the world,” she said, and almost smiled. Then she went on.

All eyes were on Williper Mère when she in turn opened her hand. It held a \$10 note.

“And I took her for a regular Tartar,” Mamie gasped.

Williper Père grinned. “There’s kind hearts in the world,” he said.

They then resumed their walk along the sea wall, paid another visit to the beach, ate a bag of peanuts, one ditto of sweet corn, drank each a glass of root

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beer, and slowly made their way to the depot.

It was at the depot that they saw the Russian Ambassador. Little Jack, whose ears were wide open, heard a man behind him whisper, "There's the Russian Ambassador," and turning saw him point to a foreign looking gentleman standing between two young ladies, and looking very much like a common, every day kind of a being.

The news was quickly communicated to his friends, and the celebrated diplomat received a careful scrutiny.

"He's seen the Czar," hoarsely whispered Little Jack. Then, to the surprise of his parents he shot off sideways and was standing on his crutches before the Ambassador.

"Have you seen the Czar?" the cripple asked, eagerly.

The great man looked down upon the eager face upturned to his and replied: "Many times, little brother."

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"Then let me take your hand, for I worship the Czar. He's the biggest of 'em all," Little Jack cried, unabashed.

Mamie Kelley had now seized the cripple and spirited him away.

The eyes of the diplomat rested upon her inquiringly. He perhaps was wondering whether the serfs of the American Republic bore such daughters as she. Mamie had not failed to observe this half startled look, and in her heart she treasured it for many a long day. She knew what the look meant. She had been admired by one of the greatest men in the world. Had she well spent her day! The fact that she sang at her loom for a week afterwards, and that she strode homeward over Smith's Hill alone at night, showed she was well satisfied with herself.

Little Jack, moreover, was in raptures, and his parents greatly admired his boldness.

It had been for all a spendid day. They

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had beheld and admired. They had listened to the crooning of the sea. They had received a \$10 note from the skies, and had varying impressions of a famous Ambassador.

But what to do with this \$10. It was to be spent for Little Jack, to purchase what he liked best in the world.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Little Jack himself, as they sat about the supper table and discussed the proposition; "we'll put it by and on Thanksgiving day have Mamie to a real swell dinner, for we've had a bang-up time."

This suited everybody, and it was decided as outlined by Little Jack.

Then Mamie went home wondering what it would seem like to be able to stand by the side of a great man, his social equal.

"Anyhow," she said to herself, "if I am only Mamie Kelley, I know what's what, and I'm just as good as the best of 'em."

The Willipers' Thanksgiving

Bull Dog Square looked cold and cheerless on the morning of Thanksgiving day. A restless northwest wind picked up the dust and scattered it broadcast in blinding clouds. The great shoe string mill and the dye works were shut down. All the stores—those squalid little Jew clothing stores—were closed, and Mammy Yates, having sold out her dozen morning papers, put the blinds before the windows of her atomic emporium and drifted away with the wind to her daughter's house for a holiday. The rum shops, however, kept open, in hopes that some poor devils would be found so unfortunate as to have no happier place to go to and would come to them with their small offerings of silver and celebrate the day in inebriety. To

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To the credit of Bull Dog Square there were few of these miserables, and the lazy, fat faced bartenders stood gazing out sadly through the half closed windows of their ill smelling haunts.

There was plenty of cold and hunger in the neighborhood of the Square on this day proclaimed by the President as a day of special thanksgiving to God for the bountiful harvest and the peace and prosperity of the land. People are always hungry there, for while they eat, they are seldom well fed, and the winds have years ago discovered how to spin through the houses.

But in the home of the Willipers there was warmth and good cheer, while a smashing big turkey was fast taking on a ripe brown in the pan where he roasted. This turkey, the nuts, raisins, pop-corn, candy and other good things which were in evidence on the sideboard, had been purchased with the ten dollars the stern looking lady at the Pier had given Williper

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Mère, to be spent on what Little Jack liked best in the world.

Williper Père sat in shirt sleeves by the window, industriously trying to work a steel-ring puzzle which he had bought for Little Jack, and which in a fatal moment of idleness he had picked up with the intention of showing his son just how the man had shown him it was done.

Williper Mère had manifested much interest in watching him at first, even to the neglect of the turkey; so had Little Jack, but they gave it up with a sigh after a while. He continued alone, squeezing, twisting, turning the rings which looked so innocent, but which couldn't be prevailed upon to go together.

Mamie Kelley, the beautiful weaver, received, as we already know, a special invitation, and had come over early. She had endeavored to assist Williper Mère in getting dinner ready, but had been squelched in the following words:—

“Now, you go and sit down, Mamie.

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I won't have you raise your hand. It's tired you must be, workin' always as you do, and I just want you to enjoy yourself an' rest."

This suited Little Jack, and he inveigled her over by his window, where he sat with his trusty crutches at his side.

"You come here, Mamie," he said, "and I'll tell you about the finest king I've come across so far."

The girl seated herself quietly beside him and took one of his wasted hands in hers.

"Go ahead, Jacky," she said. "Tell me all about him."

Little Jack's eyes sparkled. It was not often that he had the pleasure of telling a story to any one but his parents, and they never seemed to understand the way Mamie did.

"This king," he began, "was first of all the bravest knight in the world. He was tall and very strong, and when he had his armor on he would sail in and

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whip a dozen or more common knights without much trouble. His name was Richard Cure the Lion."

"That's a funny name," Mamie said, showing genuine interest.

"Well, you bet they had funny names in those days," Little Jack returned. "They only had first names, and tacked on whatever was their specialty. This king's name was just Richard, but people added 'Cure the Lion,' which the book said meant strong-hearted, or with the heart of a lion. That's where the lion comes in. Anyhow, he was a great fighter, and just after he got to be king he went to the Holy Land on the crusades."

"What were they?—something to ride on?"

"No, I don't think they was. I don't know just what they was. Anyway, he rode a horse part of the way and went by boat the rest."

"Perhaps 'Crusades' was the name of the boat."

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“Now I never thought of that,” Little Jack exclaimed. “It might be so. But come to think, it couldn’t be a boat. I believe it was a journey, for other kings went on crusades all by land. Well, as I was telling you, he went to the Holy Land to drive the Turks away from Jerusalem.”

“I wish he’d come and drive some of the ‘Turks’ off Smith Hill,” Williper Mère interrupted, irreverently.

Mamie Kelley burst into a ringing laugh and Williper Père chuckled over his puzzle. Little Jack, however, proceeded seriously :

“You see, Mamie, the Turks had driven all the Jews from Jerusalem, or a good part of them, and occupied the Holy Sepulchre.”

“What!—lived in the grave?” Mamie inquired, quizzingly.

“Now don’t get funny,” Little Jack retorted. “I just tell you as the story runs. The book says ‘occupied the Holy

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Sepulchre,' and what it means you can guess as well as I can. So Richard Cure the Lion came along to drive them out. They had a king, the Turks had, named Salladin, and he was a dandy. None of the crusaders had been able to beat him till Richard Cure the Lion came along, and even Richard had a hard time to get the best of him. This Salladin found out after a bit that it was just tempting Providence to send his best fighters against Richard in the open field, for he would cut them up in short order; so he made a scheme to capture the English king. He had a very beautiful black horse that followed him about just like a dog, and would never be happy away from him. So Salladin sent this horse to Richard as a present."

"I don't think much of him for that," Mamie exclaimed.

"You just wait and see how it comes out," Little Jack retorted.

Mamie looked properly squelched, and

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the cripple continued: "Richard was tickled to death to get the horse, for he had never seen such a glorious creature before, and the next day he must try him in the battle. So he rode him out as proud as could be, but when the horse got the lay of the land he bolted for the camp of the Turks, just as Salladin knew he would, and Richard couldn't hold him back. He yanked on the bit, but it was no use, and he saw that he would be captured sure if he didn't do something quick. So he slid to the ground just as the horse reached the first regiment of Turks, and prepared to fight them all alone. They came at him right and left, but he laid about him with his battle axe, and every time he struck there was one less Turk. My! how he did wallop them! He was all covered with blood and sweat when his own knights came to his rescue, and he couldn't have held out much longer."

"Say! He was a daisy, that Richard, wasn't he?" Mamie said. "That's the

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kind of a man for me. I could just have loved that man."

"But he was a king, remember," said Little Jack.

"Well, supposing he was," the girl retorted. "If I had been living in those days I would have been a queen, perhaps. They didn't care so much then about being poor. If a man was strong and brave and a woman beautiful, that was all that was required."

Little Jack eyed his fair companion proudly.

"I wish you was a queen, Mamie," he said. "By Jimminy! I do. Say! Them knights would have all been dead in love with you, and they'd have made you 'Queen of Youth and Beauty' at the tournament."

"What was that, Jacky?"

"That was the biggest time of all. Every little while, when the knights had nobody to fight, they held a tournament. They had a grand-stand just like a base-

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ball field, where all the ladies and the old men sat. Then, whoever gave the tournament, selected the finest looking girl in the country 'round and made her 'Queen of Youth and Beauty.' She was to award the prize to the best knight.

"Then the knights fought on horseback before this grand-stand, and the one that disabled all the others would kneel before the 'Queen of Youth and Beauty,' and she would place on his head the wreath of flowers, which was the prize."

"And did they fight just for that?"

"You bet they did, and sometimes half of them was killed."

"Those were the men for me!" Mamie exclaimed emphatically, and her eyes sparkled. "If I had been the 'Queen of Youth and Beauty,' and a fine, young knight, after risking his life, had come to me claiming the prize, I'd a kissed him slap before all the people, just to show how proud I was of him. There ain't no such men now. Mill help and dry goods

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clerks are all I know, and a silly lot they are. There isn't one of them man enough to fight unless he is in liquor, and instead of fighting for a woman, they stand on the street corners and make remarks. Oh, I hate them !”

“Ivanhoe is the fellow you'd a been stuck on,” Little Jack said, with a solemn shake of his head. He was Richard Cure the Lion's bosom friend, and was always looking for a damsel in distress, that he might fight for her. Irish or Swede, it didn't matter to him, so long as she hadn't any friends.”

“Was he as good a man as King Richard ?” Mamie asked.

“Well, he wasn't so strong. The king was a mighty powerful man, but Ivanhoe could lick anything of his size between England and the Holy Land. I tell you, I do like to read about him, 'specially when he fought O'Brian Gilbert for the Jewess Rebecca.”

“I shouldn't a thought he'd a fought

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for a Sheeny," Mamie said, with typical Smith Hill contempt for the children of the Ghetto.

"They didn't call 'em Sheenies then," Little Jack continued seriously, "though perhaps they ought to, for Rebecca's father was a regular out and outer. His name was Isaac, and he was always sneaking around and wringing his hands just like a Sheeny at a rag sale. But Rebecca was a lady, and she was as pretty as a picture, too."

"That accounts for it," Mamie put in with vigor. "Had she been homely your brave Ivanhoe wouldn't have crossed the square for her. They'll all make a bluff at fighting for a good-looking girl, be she Sheeny or Mulatto; but if her face is plain, just watch 'em jump the fence!"

"Well, you know better than I do," Little Jack shrewdly suggested, and then continued: "Ivanhoe never asked for rewards, anyhow, and when he whipped

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O'Brian Gilbert, he never made any motion for thanks."

"But what became of Rebecca?" Mamie asked.

"Now that's a puzzler," Little Jack replied. She just dropped out of sight, but between me and you, I think she'd a had Ivanhoe had he asked her."

"I've got it at last, by gravy!" came in a triumphant voice from the chair near the window, and turning, they saw Williper Père holding aloft the puzzle, the rings securely interlocked.

"Well, you're a fool to spend your whole morning working over a silly thing like that," Williper Mère said with emphasis.

"But you see," her worthy husband replied with conviction, "I started it and I just couldn't give it up till I done it."

Dinner was now on the table, and the party fell to. I was just going to say, "Never was there such a turkey!" when I thought of Dickens. Isn't it too bad

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that he said all the good things and the rest of us must go 'round the lighthouse for an expression!

Anyhow, Little Jack was very happy, and Williper Père ate a very great deal. Williper Mère smiled tirelessly and poured tea, while Mamie described the wonderful agility of the King of the Bounding Wire, whom she had seen at Keith's the preceding week.

"If I ever grow to be a man," Little Jack said with conviction, "I don't know which I'd rather be—a king or that fellow. What a man he must be!"

"You're a crazy-head," Williper Mère said fondly. "But he wouldn't be the man for me. A feller jumpin' up an' down on a wire! Pshaw! Give me the man as makes his two dollars a day regular an' brings it home to his wife. He's good enough for such poor old bodies as I be."

"But what if he only makes a dollar and seventy-five cents?" Williper Père asked, with a twinkle in his eye.

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“Well,” his wife replied slowly, “there are dollar-and-seventy-five-cent men and dollar-and-seventy-five-cent men. But don’t you bother no trouble, Henry. I ain’t thinkin’ of applyin’ for divorce.”

Mamie went home at 8:30, when the fire died down.

The Wolf at the Door

In the aftermath of the Williper's Thanksgiving Dinner, distressful things happened. The economic world turned over, and Williper Père fell out of his berth. The thread mill at which he had worked for so many years found its orders suddenly cut off in volume, and it was found necessary to discharge one-third of the employes. Williper Père lost his job.

The little tenement in the alley off Bull Dog Square was the scene of great depression in consequence. The head of the family had never been out of work before, and he did not know which way to turn. He was a dresser tender, and this especial occupation he knew well. He felt that he might be able to do other things, but his confidence was not of an inspiring

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quality. As a producer he was only one-third of a man. Machinery was the other two-thirds, and the first proportion had come to rely greatly upon the other.

He spent the first week of loafing by tramping through Pawtucket and the other factory towns of the State, looking for a job similar to the one he had lost. There were no vacancies. No one wanted a man. Dresser tenders were a drug in the market. So also were mill operatives of every description, for Hard Times were abroad in the land.

Mamie Kelley came down from Smith Hill to condole with the wretched Willipers, but she was not cheerful. The sword hung over her head also, and she worked in fear and trembling.

"Williper has just simply got to find something to do, or we will be in the street," Williper Mère said with marked decision.

"That's it," returned Williper Père. "I've just simply got to."

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“What’s the matter with everything?” Little Jack asked anxiously.

“That’s just what we’d all like to know,” Mamie replied. “I don’t know, for one. The mills have no orders. The country is scared. They say we make more stuff than the people can use. It’s a stone wall to me. I don’t know what I’ll do if I lose my own job. I ain’t got a soul to fall back on.”

“You come and live with us, then!” cried Little Jack.

The girl kissed his wasted cheek and broke into tears. This started Williper Mère, and she was soon sobbing in concert. Williper Père felt the corners of his mouth twitch, but he realized that it was not manly to cry. So he bravely resisted the temptation.

“Jack is right, Mamie,” he said. “You come and live with us. We’ll get on somehow.”

The next week Mamie Kelley followed her trunk, pushed in a wheelbarrow by

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Williper Père to the latter's home. The sword had fallen!

The immediate present was not to be feared, for both Mamie and the Willipers had a rainy-day fund in the savings bank. But it was like cutting teeth to draw upon this.

Day after day the man and the girl went through the Square into the city looking for employment. They tried the industrial bureaus, but quickly caught on to the game played there. Up and down they walked, looking everywhere, and each night related their experiences to Williper Mère and Little Jack.

"It's just like this," Mamie once said, "the world ain't got no use for us. Nobody wants us, or cares whether we live or die. I feel, when goin' 'round, just as if I was outside a big walled city with iron gates. Inside everything is lovely. Outside it's misery.

"I goes up to the man at one of the gates and says, 'Let me in, please.'

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“ He says, ‘ No, you can’t go in ; there ain’t room for another soul inside just at present.’

“ ‘ But I want to get in awful bad,’ I says to him.

“ ‘ I can’t help it,’ he says. ‘ Don’t blame me. I’d let you in fast enough if I could, but I just can’t.’

“ So ’round an’ ’round the walls I go, tryin’ a gate here and a gate there, but always the same, with variations, for one sends you away gentle like, and another scowls as much as to say, ‘ How dare you ask such a thing!’ ”

“ If Richard Cure the Lion was only living ! ” cried Little Jack. “ He’d knock in a gate with his battle-axe mighty lively, I tell you ! He wouldn’t take no back talk ! ”

“ Ah ! ” sighed Mamie, “ now is when I feel if I only had a man behind me.”

“ Yes, and a kitchen full of young ’uns ! ” Williper Mère returned, with fine scorn. “ You’re well off as you be, Mamie

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Kelley, I tell you that. Hungry babies is what gnaws the heart out, folks tells me as knows. 'Tis what keeps the Irish down, havin' such terrible families. Now there's Bridget O'Shay—she that was Beazie McCarthy,—you remember, Williper. She worked next spooler to me for years. A rosy-cheeked girl was Beazie McCarthy when she married Mike O'Shay. Seven children she had in as many years, and look at her now! You mind me, Mamie Kelley, and don't you fret about gettin' married. It's the natural curse of the Irish—I mean the children as follows.”

A scratching sound was now audible in the hall.

“What's that?” Little Jack inquired, pricking up his ears.

“It's ‘the wolf at the door!’” Williper Père replied with a grin.

This is the first joke ever known to have been uttered by Williper Père. A gruesome joke it was, and it set the

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shivers chasing one another up Little Jack's spine. It clung to the boy's memory, too, and haunted him continually throughout that winter.

The wolf at the door! Oh, that terrible wolf at the door! When Williper Père would sit by the fire of an evening with head bowed in despair, and the two women sat by the table sewing feverishly on sweat-shop clothes, Little Jack, feeling strangely depressed, would close his eyes and in fancy hear the gnawing, gnawing of that hungry wolf and see its clammy nose poking through the crack it had made.

When the funds in the savings bank were exhausted, all the family had to depend on was the little that Williper Mère and Mamie could earn with their needles, and even this ill-paid labor was not enough in volume to keep them busy. A God-send in the shape of a snowstorm was the means of Williper Père earning four dollars. How he revelled in his

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work! It was so good to be earning money again. But the sun soon destroyed this source of revenue, and he took to the streets again. He made a practice of visiting each of the mills once every week, and his face soon became known. He had no longer to state his business, but simply to show his face at the office window, to be met by the curt remark, "No help wanted to-day."

Now let it be remembered that throughout this miserable ordeal, Williper Père did not cry out against the rich, or spend any of his time reflecting on the injustice of natural laws. He did not concern himself at all about other men's affairs, but took it for granted that he must either find work or starve. In his way he was fiercely selfish, for he met hundreds of other men whose situation was even more desperate than his own, without extending to them any considerable sympathy. They must do the best they could. He did not stop to ask them how many helpless

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children they had, but thought solely of his own Little Jack, and kept his own secrets as to the possibilities of employment which he discovered in his rounds.

It might be termed maudlin pathos if an attempt were made to describe the scenes at home when he would return with springing step and report that at one of the mills he had been told to come around in the morning, as there might be a chance. Williper Mère, at such times, would bustle around vigorously and get up a meal just a little above the average. Mamie would do up her wealth of auburn-hued tresses especially fine, just as if she meditated again showing herself to the world, and Little Jack would ripple with delight, and chatter like a robin arrived after a long winter.

But we know these chances did not materialize. Still Williper Père kept at it, never giving up hope, doggedly determined to find work.

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They were now in debt to their green-grocer, and lived in constant dread of a withdrawal of credit. Brave as he was in looking for work, Williper Père did not possess the nerve to do the shopping. He could not say the words, "Please put it on the book!"

Williper Mère, however, rose to the occasion, and though every time she entered the market her heart beat furiously, she forced sunshine into her face and spoke pleasantly to the awful groceryman, bidding him be of good cheer, for "Williper would certainly get a job soon, as times was lookin' up."

"Times were looking up!" God bless your stout heart, Williper Mère.

There was a line one hundred yards long before the headquarters of the Overseer of the Poor each morning,—a line of one-meal-a-day men and women, with empty baskets; and the preachers in churches, high and low, no longer preached sermons, but pled and prayed

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and stormed at their congregations that they must open their hearts and give, for men, women and children—their fellow citizens—were dying daily of cold and hunger.

Then the end came, and the terrors of the wolf at the door vanished for Little Jack. It was all so simple, too. Williper Père got the job of assistant box maker and man of all work in Mamie Kelley's woolen mill. His wages were to be seven dollars a week until times got better.

Williper Mère and Mamie danced crazily together on receipt of the good news, and Little Jack clapped his hands and joined in the commotion with lusty lungs.

Seven dollars a week! They could live on six and pay the remaining dollar on the bug-a-boo grocery bill.

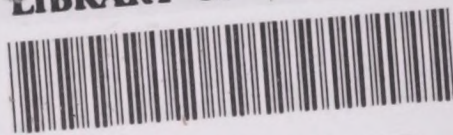
The peace of heaven was in their hearts that night when they slept, and the next morning Williper Père was off half an

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hour ahead of time, swinging his dinner pail ostentatiously. He was a proud man—a vain man—a wholly happy man. He had a job!

The everlasting gates, which had been closed so long, had lifted up their heads and he had gone in.

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